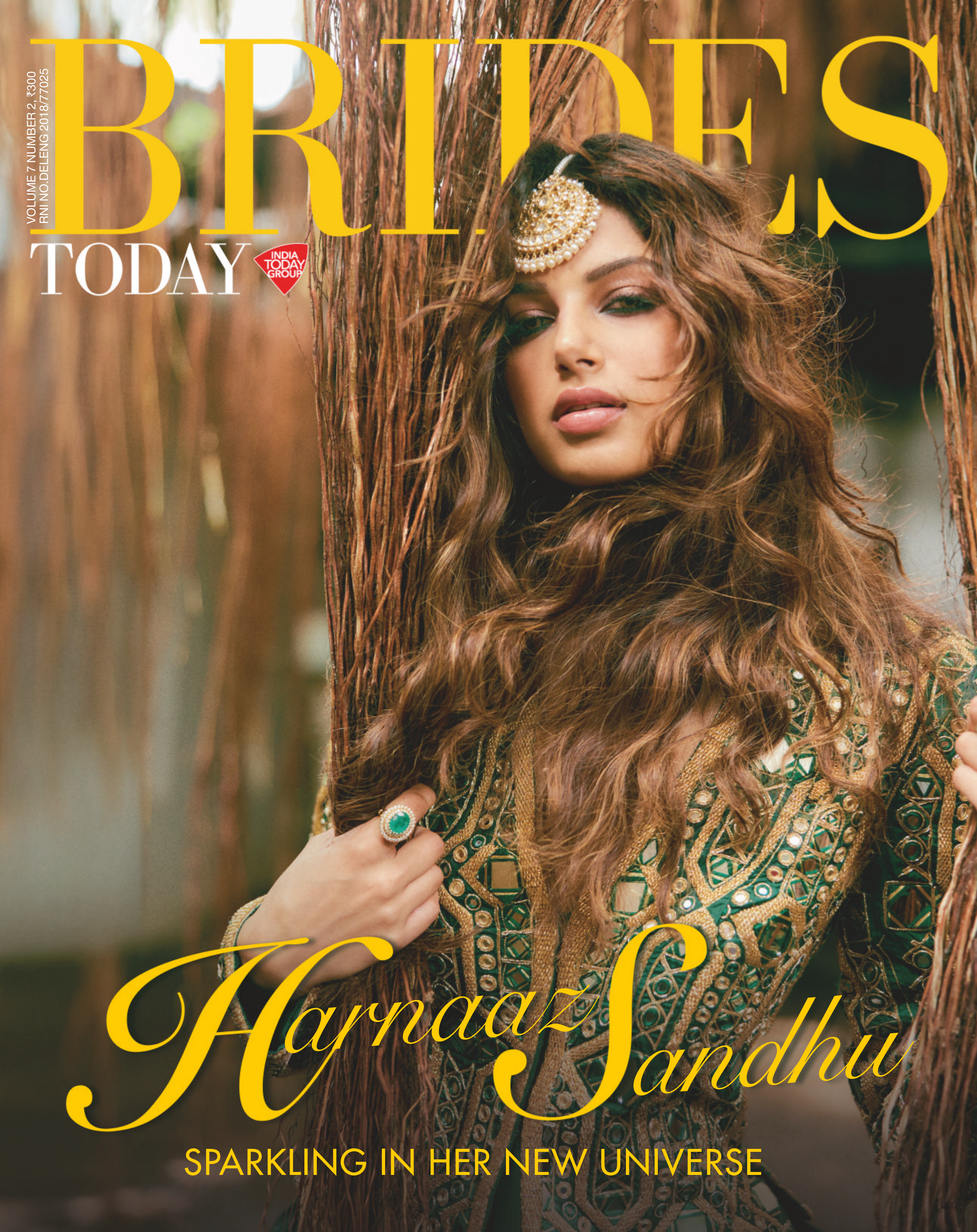

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Harnaaz Sandhu

SPARKLING IN HER NEW UNIVERSE

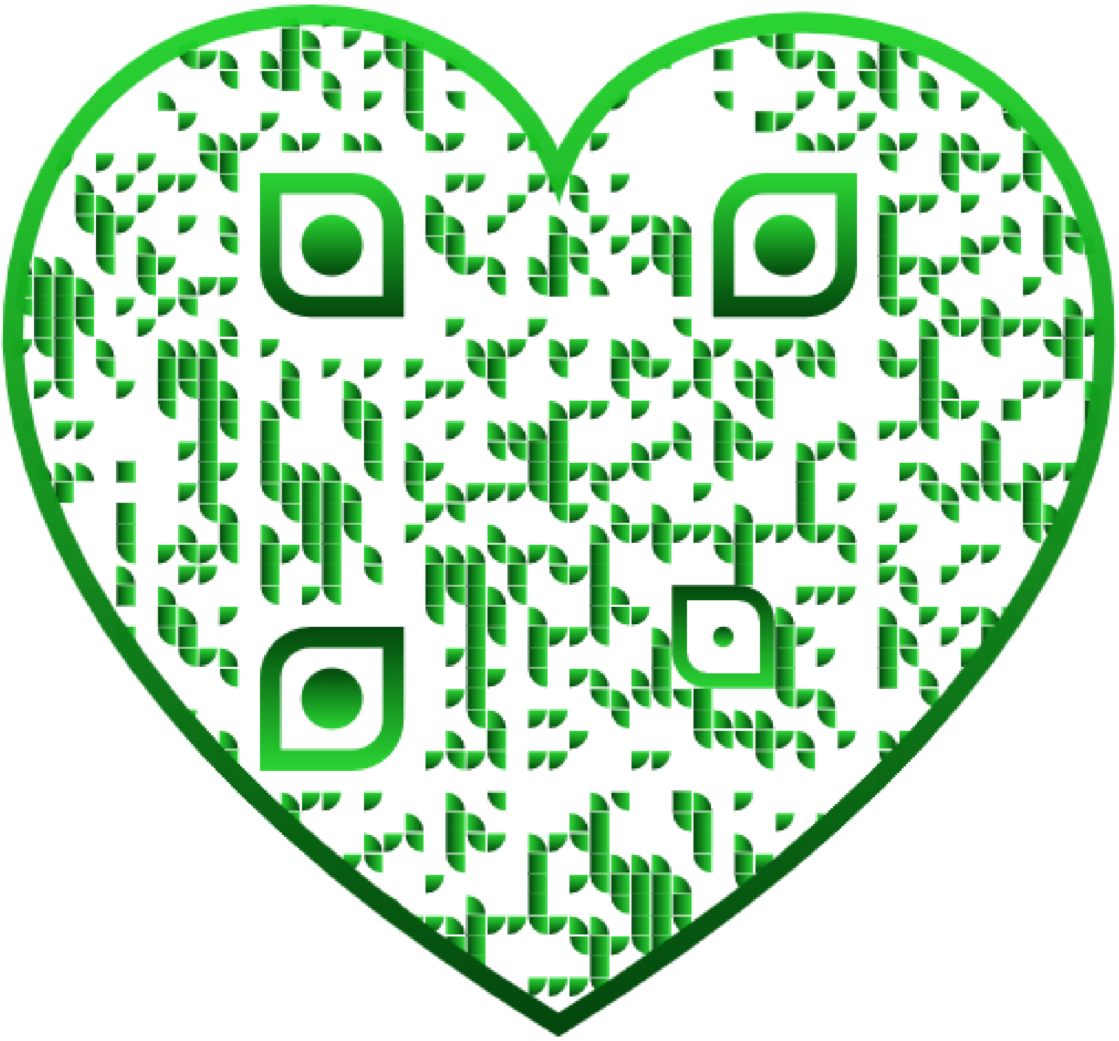

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IMAGE COURTESY: THE BRAND

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Jewels By Queenie Earrings - Emerald Collection, price on request

IMAGE COURTESY: THE BRAND

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EDITOR'S NOTE

RUCHIKA MEHTA

There's something truly magical about weddings. They are more than just ceremonies — they are stories of love, tradition, and dreams woven together into unforgettable moments. Each detail, from the sparkle of a ring to preparing for the big day, each part of the journey tells a tale not just of two people, but of families, cultures, and shared celebrations.

India is the world's largest wedding market. As the festive season kickstarts, this issue highlights the latest in the industry for brides and grooms. A special feature brings a retrospective of one of India's most celebrated couturiers, Shane and Falguni Peacock, whose designs have graced the most prestigious red carpets as a celebrity favourite. The couple has been styling international A-listers like Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian, and Jennifer Lopez, among many others for years. They truly do know how to make a star look even brighter.

Another designer to admire is the reticent but extremely talented Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala, whose *Parsi gara* creations have been inspired by centuries of Oriental and Persian hand embroidery techniques, craft and craftsmanship. The sartorial sophistication of the embroidery he threads into his saris and *lehengas* makes his outfits a must-have in every Parsi household — and beyond.

Our cover girl, the gorgeous Harnaaz Sandhu, a former Miss Universe, who made her Bollywood debut with *Baaghi 4*, is the hottest toast of the entertainment industry. In a heart-to-heart chat, she opens up about her strong beliefs, her vision to make a difference through her social initiatives, and her journey from the spotlight of pageantry to the arc lights of cinema.

The world of fashion is, of course, obsessed with crafts, weaves and traditional embroideries. Although what makes them all the more special is when they're handed down from one generation to another as heirlooms. Four top designers, known to reimagine and reinterpret heirloom pieces share their thoughts on such ornate hand-me-downs and how they contemporise them for the next generation.

This colourful issue sets the tone for the season, and we wish all our readers a very happy Dussehra, Karva Chauth and Diwali!

Ruchika

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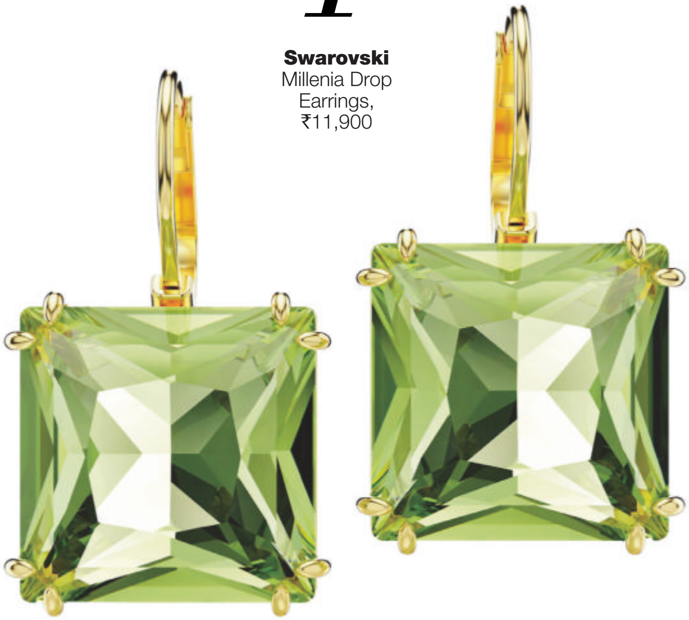
ALL THAT GLITTERS

Jimmy Choo
Bon Bon Bag, price on request

IMAGE COURTESY: THE BRAND

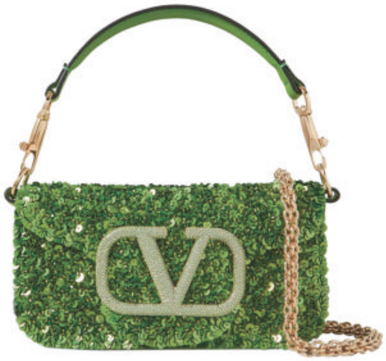
1

Swarovski
Millenia Drop
Earrings,
₹11,900



MATCHA MAGIC

Fashion takes inspiration from the beverage making waves worldwide.



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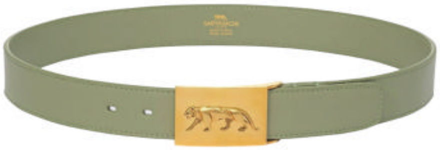
Valentino Garavani
V-Logo Signature
Sequinned
Embellished Mini Bag,
price on request



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Sabyasachi
The Trophy Belt,
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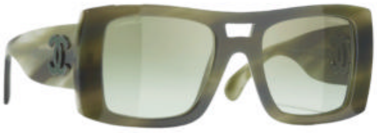

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Pilot Sunglasses,
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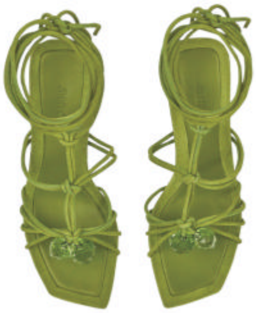

5

Jimmy Choo
Jemma Suede
Sandals, ₹55,279
(approx)

MUST HAVES

1

2

Tarun Tahiliani

4

11

5

3

10

CHIC & SCULPTED

Make a statement with silhouettes that fuse structure and style.

9

7

Amit Aggarwal

6

8

1. Simkhai Bridget Metal Shell Clutch Bag - Gold, ₹73,204 **2. Versace** Medusa Greca Cuff Bracelet, ₹1,04,829. **3. Cult Gaia** Nalia Mini Clutch, ₹28,199. **4. Swarovski** Hyperbola Cuff, ₹45,500. **5. Cartier** Reflection de Cartier Watch, price on request. **6. Christian Louboutin** Just Jewel 85 Embellished VC Mules, ₹1,34,064. **7. Paola Sighinolfi** Lis Cutout Earrings, ₹47,569. **8. Dior** Zodiac Flowers Triangle Scarf, ₹34,500. **9. Jimmy Choo** Ixia 95 Embellished Mesh Pumps, ₹1,06,414. **10. Jennifer Behr** Darya Polished-Dinish Earrings - Gold, ₹32,194. **11. Bottega Veneta** Sterling Silver Hoop Earrings, ₹75,000

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Photographs by
Manasi Sawant
Styling by
Anushree Sardesai

DRESSED TO 'VOW'

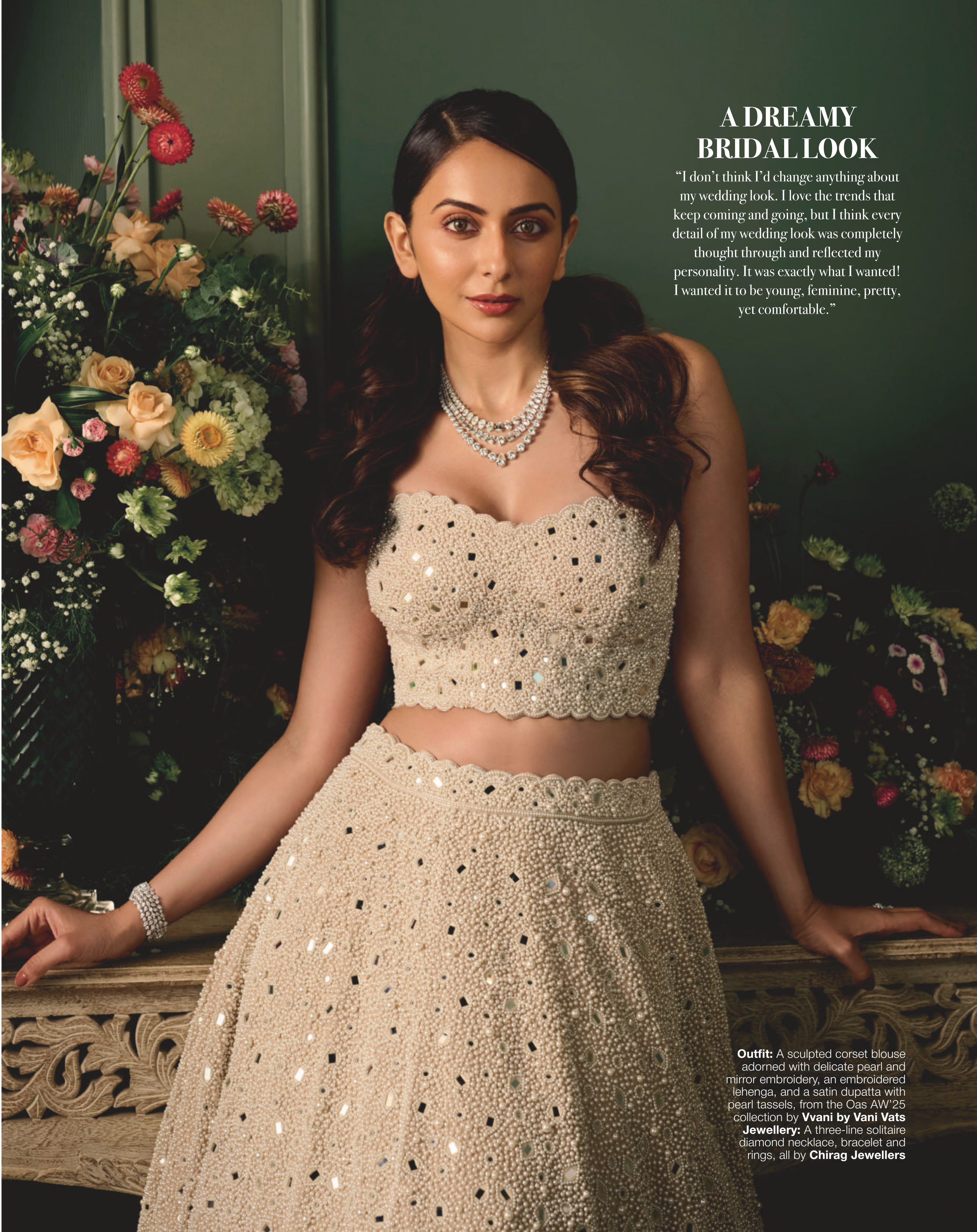
Bringing you Rakul Preet Singh as she reminisces about her bridal looks, a retrospective on the fashion powerhouses Falguni and Shane Peacock, and an ode to Banarasi and Kanjeevaram, the royal drapes.

RAKUL PREET SINGH

BEYOND THE VEIL

Reminiscing about her dreamy nuptials and ensembles, the actor reflects on her comfort-first style and timeless bridal philosophy that defined her wedding aesthetic.

Interview by SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY
Photography by MANASI SAWANT
Styling by ANUSHREE SARDESAI



A DREAMY BRIDAL LOOK

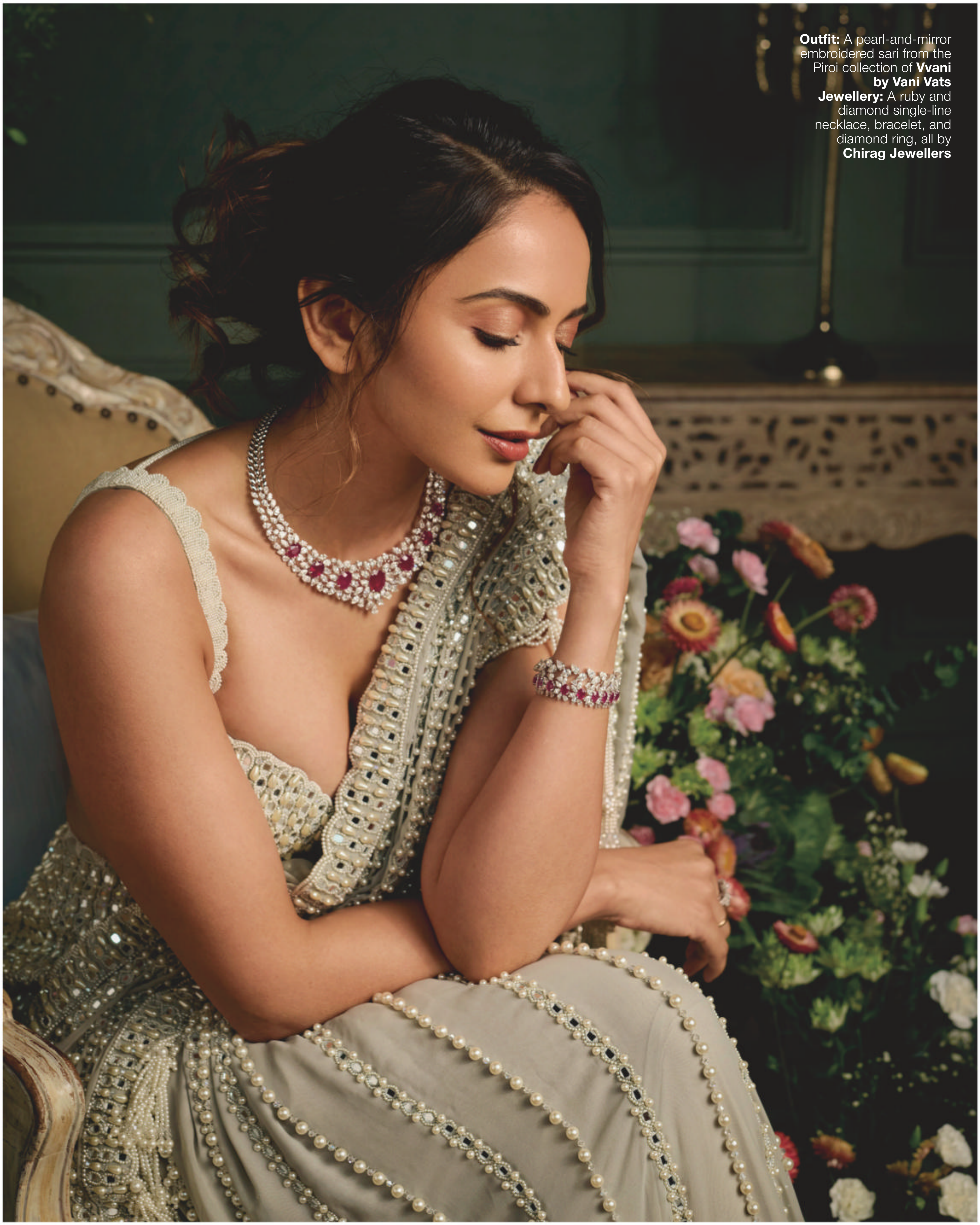
"I don't think I'd change anything about my wedding look. I love the trends that keep coming and going, but I think every detail of my wedding look was completely thought through and reflected my personality. It was exactly what I wanted! I wanted it to be young, feminine, pretty, yet comfortable."

Outfit: A sculpted corset blouse adorned with delicate pearl and mirror embroidery, an embroidered lehenga, and a satin dupatta with pearl tassels, from the Oas AW'25 collection by **Vvani by Vani Vats** **Jewellery:** A three-line solitaire diamond necklace, bracelet and rings, all by **Chirag Jewellers**

TIMELESSNESS OVER STATEMENT-MAKING

"I've always believed in the concept of less is more. I'd always go for timeless minimalism because trends are impermanent, statements come and go. Years down the line, when I look back at my wedding pictures, I still want it all to feel timeless, and I am someone who always thinks."

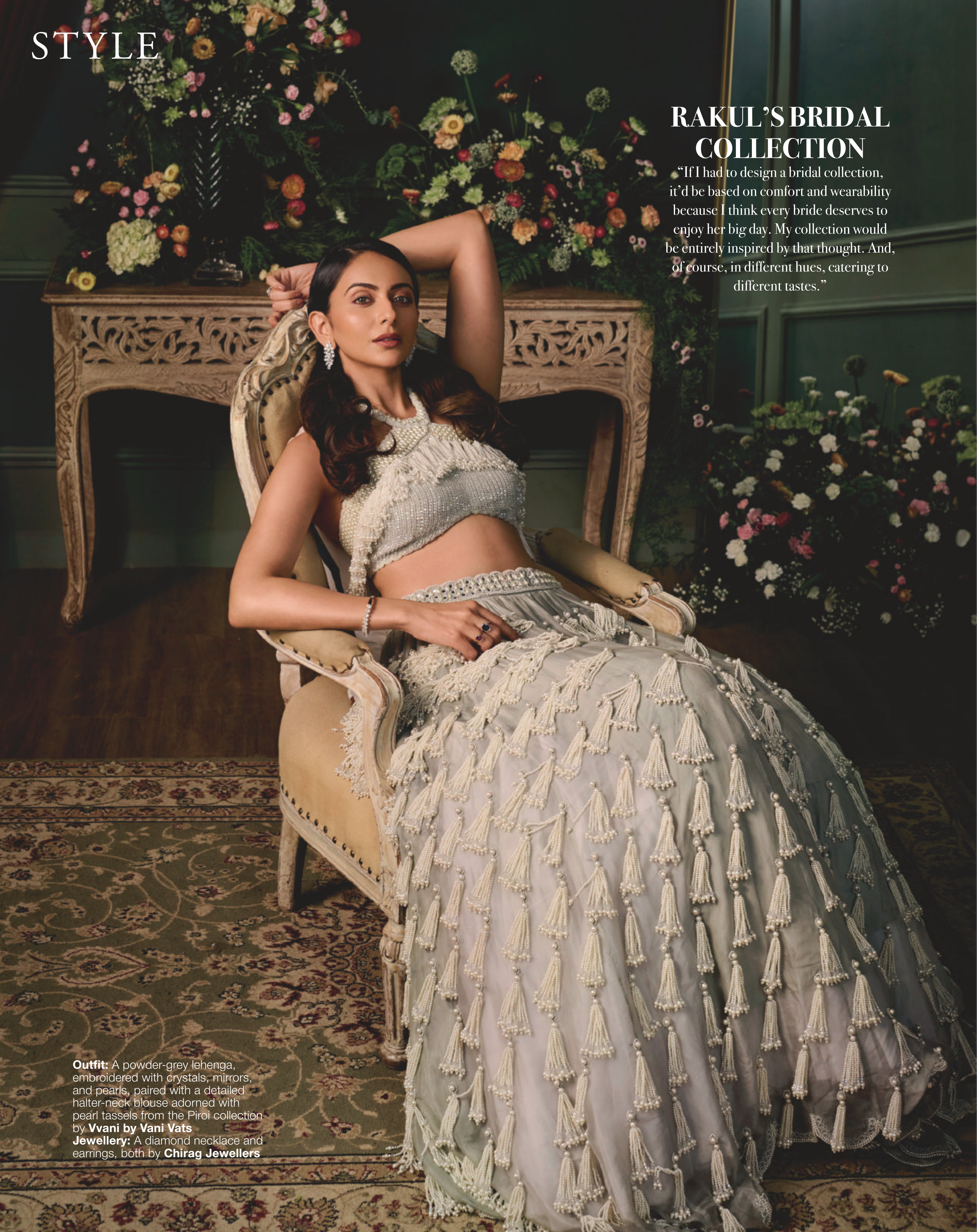
Outfit: A sculpted blouse with pearl and mirror embroidery, paired with an embroidered lehenga and a satin dupatta with cascading pearl tassels, from the Oas AW'25 collection by **Vvani by Vani Vats**
Jewellery: Emerald and diamond necklace, earrings, and rings, all by **Chirag Jewellers**



Outfit: A pearl-and-mirror embroidered sari from the Piroi collection of **Vvani by Vani Vats**
Jewellery: A ruby and diamond single-line necklace, bracelet, and diamond ring, all by **Chirag Jewellers**

A MEMORABLE MOMENT

"For me, the most memorable fashion moment throughout the festivities was actually not from the day in particular, but all through the wedding – it was me wearing sneakers and being able to dance in every outfit! I chose comfort over everything else."



RAKUL'S BRIDAL COLLECTION

"If I had to design a bridal collection, it'd be based on comfort and wearability because I think every bride deserves to enjoy her big day. My collection would be entirely inspired by that thought. And, of course, in different hues, catering to different tastes."

Outfit: A powder-grey lehenga, embroidered with crystals, mirrors, and pearls, paired with a detailed halter-neck blouse adorned with pearl tassels from the Piroi collection by **Vvani by Vani Vats**
Jewellery: A diamond necklace and earrings, both by **Chirag Jewellers**

Hair Artist: Aliya Shaikh
Makeup Artist: Salim Sayed
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Assistant Stylist: Jhanvi Khatwani
Assistant Producer: Krishika Shirishkar
Editorial Coordinator: Shalini Kanojia

ALL THAT GLITTERS WITH
FALGUNI & SHANE PEACOCK

While known for their feathery, dazzling designs, this designer duo is renowned even more for their commitment to making India shine on the global stage. Today, they're among the most recognisable names in fashion to emerge out of the country, boasting an extensive and evolving roster of international clients. In conversation with **Brides Today**, *Falguni and Shane Peacock look back at their prolific journey and ahead at their ambitious expansion plans.*

By SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY

What do Beyoncé, Paris Hilton, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Nicki Minaj, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Kim Kardasian and a plethora of other A-list celebrities around the world have in common? They've all sported and delighted in the artsy, avant-garde designs of Falguni Shane Peacock.

Since their onset two decades ago, the label has been dedicated to placing India on the global stage by fashioning vivid couture pieces that are replete with contemporary sentiments but rooted in Indian artisanship. The brand is now synonymous with glamour and being maximal, their sartorial language defined by over-the-top silhouettes, flowing ball gowns and classic head turners. However, when one thinks of a signature Falguni Shane Peacock, they envision dainty feathers, playful fringes and dazzling sequins.

"Right from the start, we imagined the #PeacockWoman as someone who's unapologetically glamorous — and feathers, fringes and sequins just felt like the perfect way to bring that vision to life," says Falguni Peacock. "These elements don't just act as details but add that extra sparkle that makes the wearer feel like a glam goddess. That's how we started with these as our signature elements. Today, they're a part of our brand identity… Over time, we've played

> “Right from the start, we imagined the #PeacockWoman as someone who’s unapologetically glamorous – and feathers, fringes and sequins just felt like the perfect way to bring that vision to life”

around with them, using new techniques and embroideries, and mixing in fresh elements to keep things exciting.”

BACK TO THE BEGINNINGS

It was decades ago in 2004 when the designer label showcased their debut collection at India Fashion Week with striking, edgy creations that found an audience both in India and abroad. So much so that soon after, their entire lineup was sold out at Harrods, London. Having caught overseas attention, they wasted no time foraying into international fashion weeks, beginning with a resort line at Miami Fashion Week and another at the Los Angeles Fashion Week in the heart of Hollywood. This followed nine successful seasons at the London and New York fashion weeks and recurring shout-outs from celebrities sporting their designs at red carpet events, music videos, commercials, editorial shoots and more such high-profile occasions.

Their tryst with international clientele grew further in 2010, when pop star Fergie’s team reached out to them to design her outfit for her performance at the FIFA World Cup. Fergie has since been a Falguni Shane Peacock loyalist — as have a host of other celebrities, from the likes of Jennifer Lopez and Kylie Jenner to Katy Perry and Doja Cat.

“International exposure has been such a game-changer for us,” says Shane Peacock. “Dressing iconic personalities gave us the chance to showcase our work to a global audience and opened up doors in ways we never imagined. And it’s not just about the clothes — it’s about connecting with different fashion capitals, industries and cultures, and telling sartorial stories that push our creativity. Every time we see our designs on a global platform, it’s a proud moment that keeps us inspired to dream bigger and do better!”

And bigger and better they did. One of the brightest standout moments of their career arrived in 2018 at the foremost annual celebration of fashion there is — the Met Gala. It was here that one of their most iconic designs shone for all to admire — the Nubian warrior queen gown worn by Queen B, Beyoncé.

“Back then, social media was just starting to gain prominence. So, while the gown wasn’t widely shared online at the time, it still garnered immense attention globally. Even today, people remind us of that moment and share how much they liked it,” says Falguni. “What makes it even more special is how it continues to resonate years later. We’ve received repeated requests from museums to exhibit the piece; just last year, another such request came in. It’s incredible to see how something we created has not only

become a part of pop culture but also a piece of art in its own right."

However, no matter how far and wide their reach grows, or how big a name finds a spot in their star-studded roster, every client to them is just that — a client. As Shane emphasises, they put in the same amount of time, effort and dedication into every piece they create, as at the end of the day, "it's about crafting something unique and meaningful for every individual we dress."

A MARRIAGE OF CREATIVE MINDS

The brand Falguni Shane Peacock is a culmination of both their personalities. While Shane tends to focus on the creative side of the design, bringing in the brand's signature elements to play, Falguni "has an incredible knack for understanding what works from a commercial perspective."

"She knows what a bride, groom, or any couture enthusiast would gravitate towards, and ensures that our designs strike the perfect balance between creativity and wearability," he adds. "It's a collaborative process. While I might create something bold and artistic, Falguni fine-tunes it to make it more relatable and appealing to our clientele."

Then again, as with any collaborative venture, both have had their fair share of creative differences over designs, campaigns and other aspects of their work, a natural facet of sharing not just their work space but their personal lives, as well. However, regardless of their disagreements and conflicting points of view, their focus always remains on what's best for the label.

"We carefully assess whose ideas or suggestions align most with the brand's vision and move forward with that. When you share the same goals and are working toward the same destination, finding common ground becomes an effortlessly easy process," Shane highlights.

A 'MONUMENTAL' CAMPAIGN

In 2021, the brand pulled off a master stroke that no other fashion designer has accomplished till date — they became the only ones in fashion to shoot a campaign at the Taj Mahal in Agra. For their showcase titled 'Love Is,' the two masterminds looked to the world wonder that did wonders (pun intended) to inspire their collection. Some 250 craftspeople from Falguni Shane Peacock's adopted villages in West Bengal wove leitmotifs drawn from the architectural marvel into the garments of the collection.

> "It's not just about the clothes but connecting with different fashion capitals, industries, cultures, and telling sartorial stories that push our creativity"

"Shooting at the Taj Mahal was nothing short of magical and surreal! Standing before it, you can't help but be awestruck by its grandeur and opulence!" recalls Falguni. "When we got the opportunity to shoot our annual campaign post-pandemic outdoors, without any lockdown restrictions, we knew we wanted to create something extraordinary. We chose to celebrate India's iconic Taj Mahal not only for its global significance and beauty, but also because we wanted to place it firmly on the fashion map."

A GLITTERING SHOWCASE

Fuelled by their passion for keeping Indian beauty and craftsmanship under the spotlight, Falguni and Shane have always been guided by this one principle — to make India shine on the global stage. And they've succeeded in this feat through more than just their designs. Their annual 'All That Glitters' Diwali Ball at the prestigious Pierre Hotel in New York is one of the most eminent Diwali bashes in the West, where highly recognisable South Asian personalities come together for one opulent

> “When we started our journey, we hadn’t fully envisioned where it would take us, but what we always knew was our desire to create a globally-recognised label”

night of grand celebration. It’s where politicians and business executives rub shoulders with fashion pundits, entertainers and more.

“The idea for the ‘All That Glitters’ Diwali Ball was born from a conversation with [entrepreneur and Priyanka Chopra Jonas’ manager] Anjula Acharia,” says Falguni. “She wanted to create something that not only celebrated Diwali on a grand scale but also brought together the Indian diaspora in New York City, for whom this festival holds deep meaning. Her vision was to bring together tradition but in a glamorous way, and the ball has become just that — a spectacular celebration of culture and community.”

Spotted at the 2024 Diwali Ball were Bela Bajaria, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, Nora Fatehi, Jay Sean, Hasan Minhaj, Simone Ashley, Jessel Taank, Imran Amed, Seema Bhansal Chadha, Indra Nooyi, Rohan Oza and dozens of other popular figures.

“Every year, the Diwali Ball keeps growing, with more attendees, more excitement and an even bigger platform to showcase the beauty of this festival,” Shane adds. “It’s heartwarming to see how it has become one of the most anticipated events for the elite Indian diaspora in the US, and we’re thrilled to be a part of this incredible journey.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Following a spectacular India Couture Week showcase, where actor Akshay Kumar played showstopper, Falguni and Shane launched ‘Rang Mahal,’ a wedding edit that celebrates artistry and bespoke ensembles. Also in the pipeline are a number of new store openings and the expansion of their India prêt boutique to offer a wider range of products to their clients.

“One of our main focuses is on store expansion, with plans to open several new locations over the next five years. Once we achieve this goal, we’ll be shifting our attention toward more creatively enriching collections,” says Falguni. “As for collaborations, we’d love to explore more opportunities with incredible creatives like [celebrity stylist] Law Roach. Working with him was an inspiring experience, and we’re always open to teaming up with visionaries who share our passion for pushing boundaries in fashion.”

Considering the resources they started out with 20 years ago and where they stand today in the global fashion landscape, the Peacocks have certainly journeyed an extraordinary path to being one of India’s most recognisable luxury couture labels. For any brand, hitting the two-decade mark is a milestone in itself, but for Falguni and Shane, there have been scores of others that stand out.

“When we started our journey 20 years ago, we hadn’t fully envisioned where it would take us, but what we always knew was our desire to create a globally-recognised label,” says Shane. “There’s still so much to achieve, but the experience we’ve gained ensures that the process will only become faster and more focused. This milestone feels like both a celebration of our past and a vision board for the future.” ■

THREADS OF TRADITION

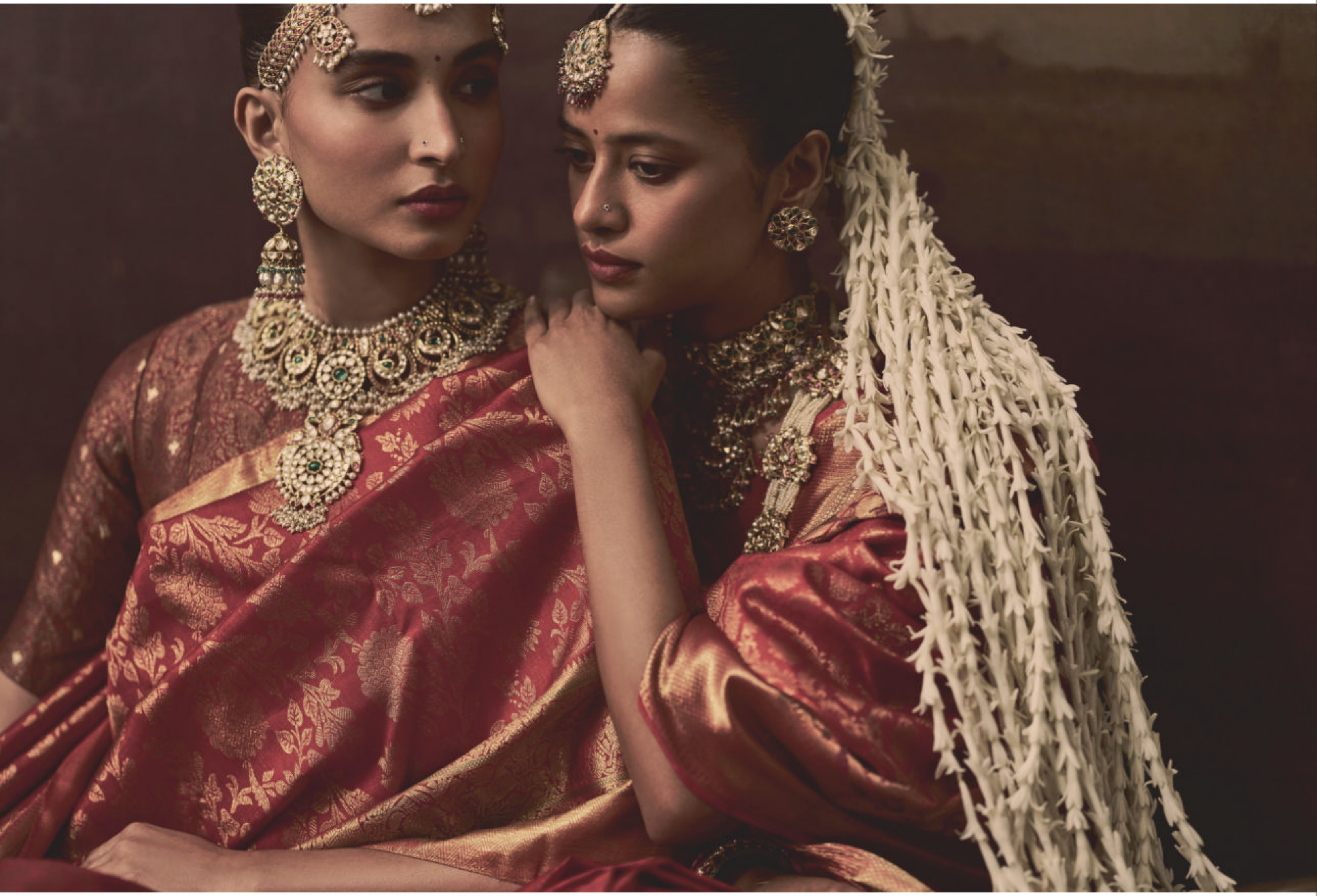
Travel back to a time where grace and heritage intertwine. This fashion shoot is a tribute to the timeless beauty of old-world bridal portraits, brought to life through regal Banarasi and Kanjeevaram saris. With intricate weaves and vintage aesthetics, **Brides Today** *brings to life the ethereal essence of a bygone era, where every fold of silk tells a story.*

Photographs by CHANDRAHAS PRABHU
Styling by WHO WORE WHAT WHEN

On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **Raw Mango**; Earrings, Necklaces and Bangles, all **Amrapali Jewels**

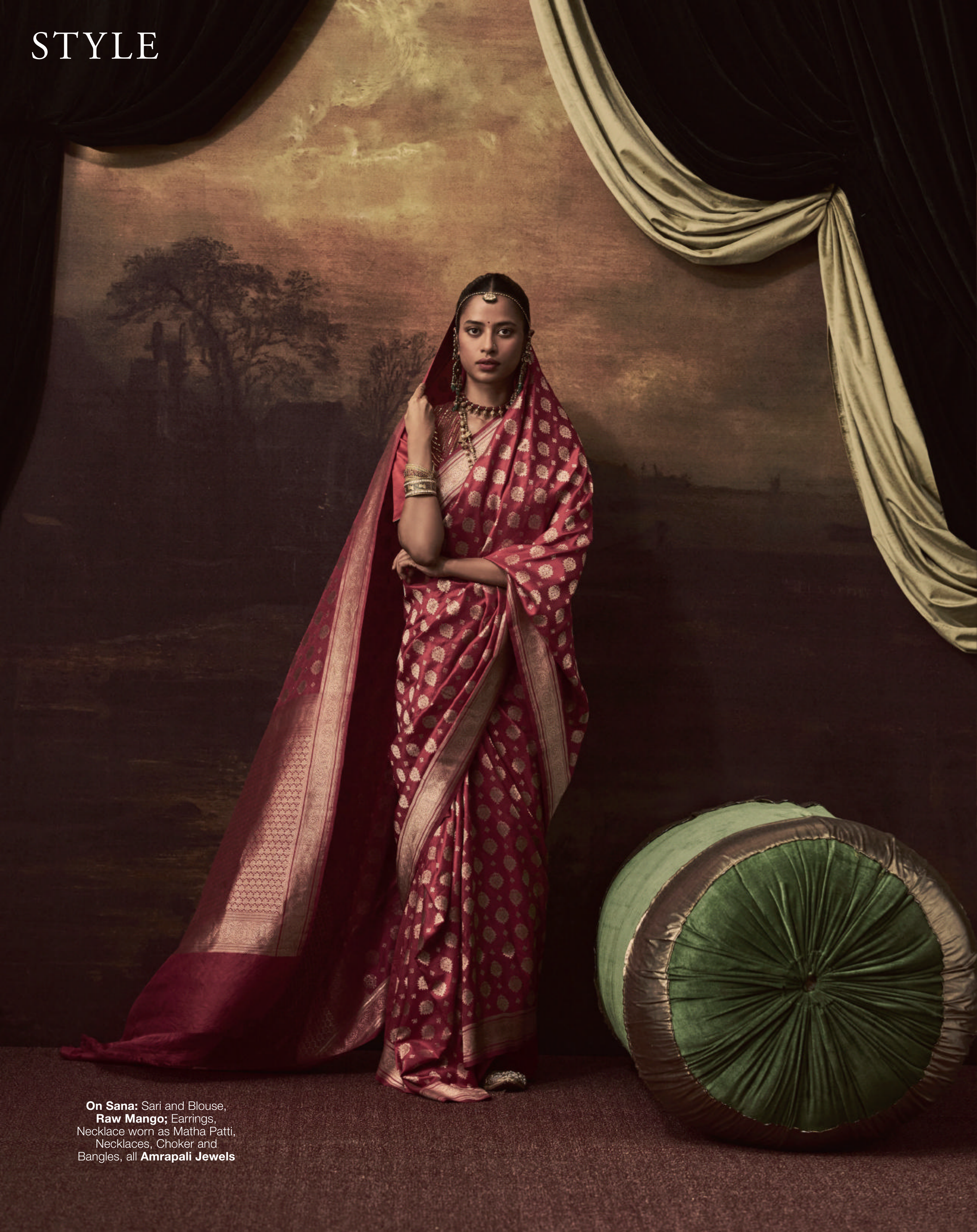
On Sana and Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **House of Raisons;** Earrings, Chokers, Necklaces and Bangles, all **Kundan Jewellers**

On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **WeaverStory;** Earrings, Maang Tikka, Choker, Necklace and Bangles, all **HM Diwan Jewellers**
On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **WeaverStory;** Earrings, Necklace and Bangles, **all HM Diwan Jewellers**



On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **Frontier Raas;** Matha Patti, Earrings and Choker, all **Fine Finery**
On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **Frontier Raas;** Maang Tikka, Earrings, Choker and Necklace, all **Fine Finery**

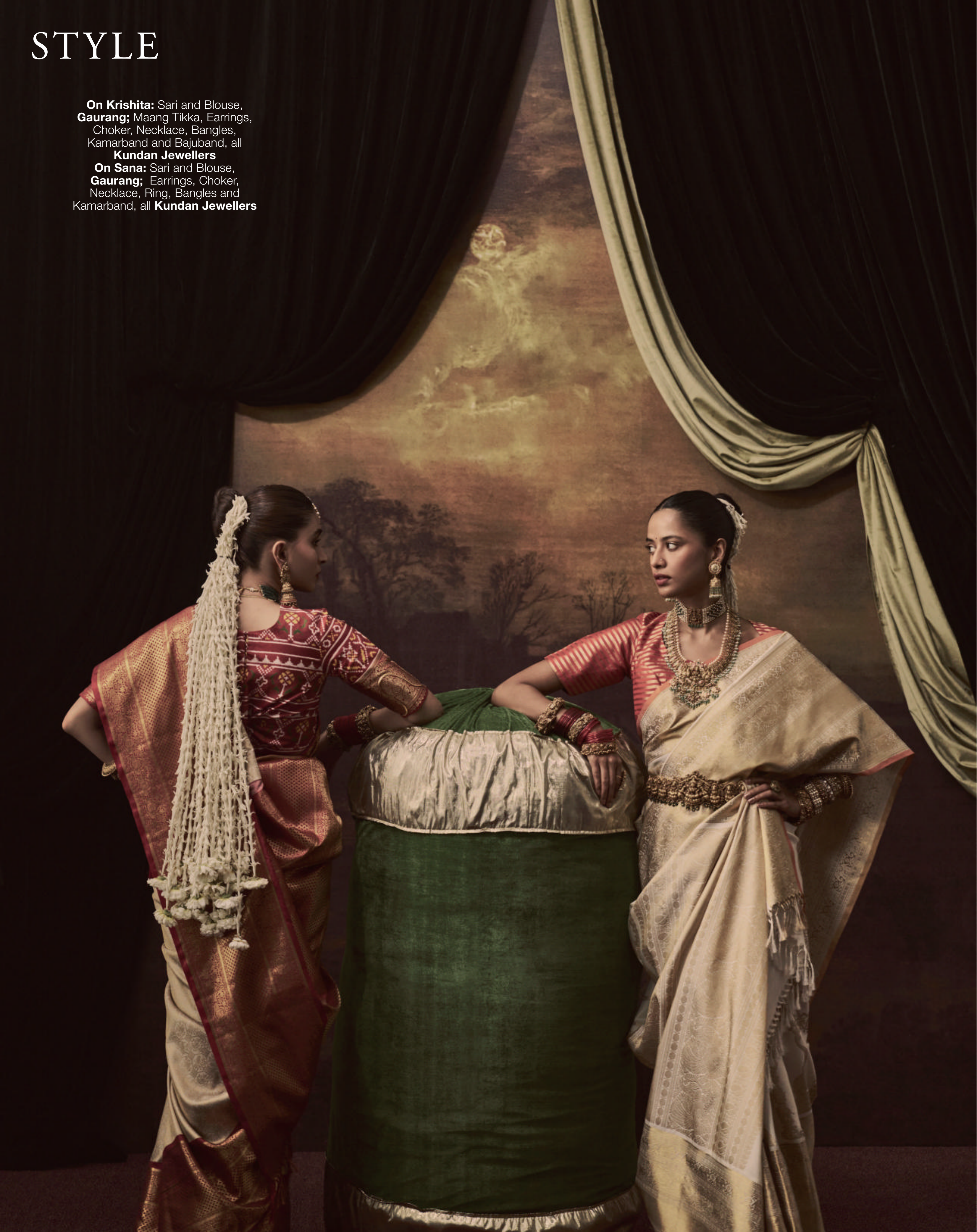
On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **WeaverStory;** Earrings, Necklace and Bangles, all **HM Diwan Jewellers**



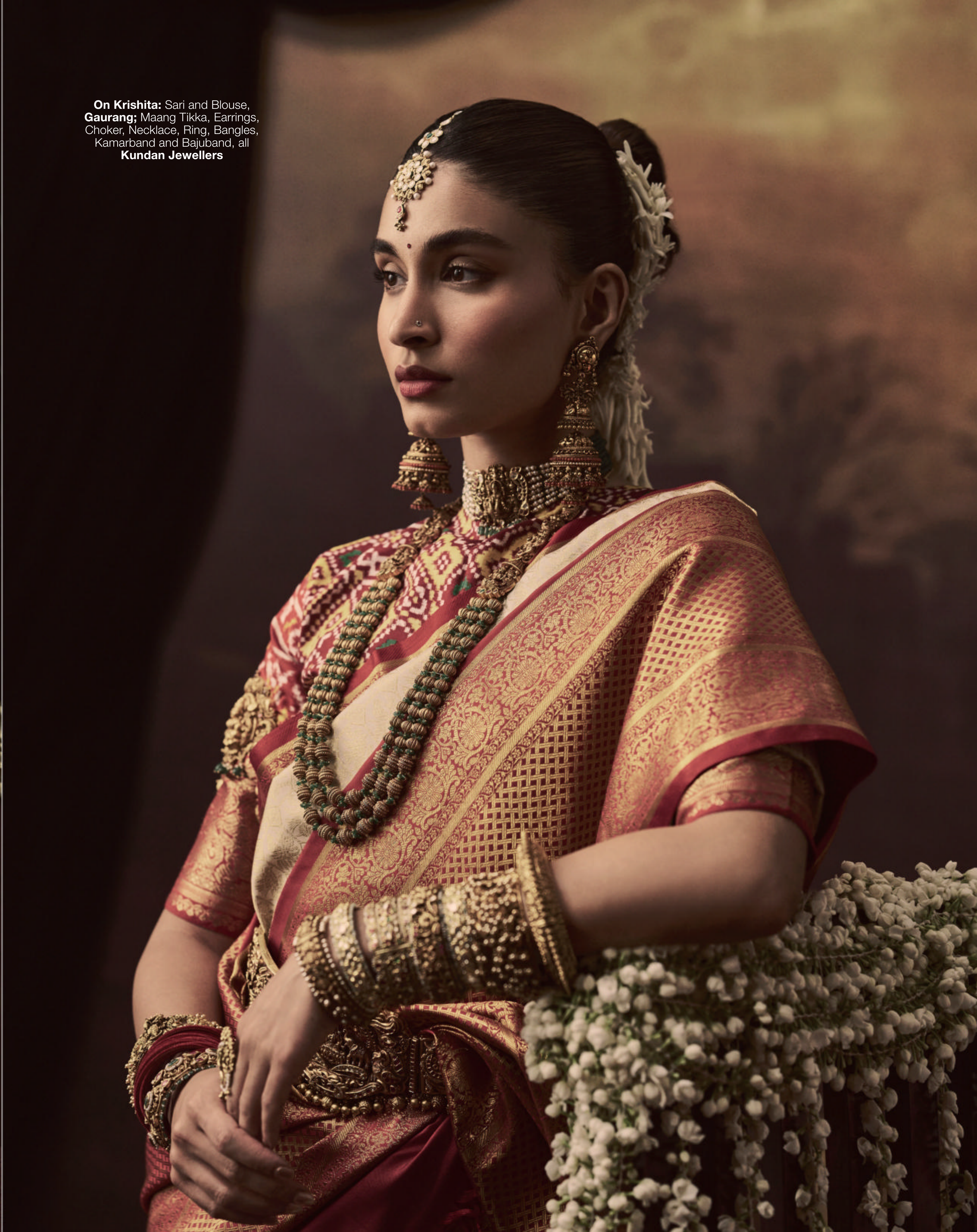
On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **Raw Mango;** Earrings, Necklace worn as Matha Patti, Necklaces, Choker and Bangles, all **Amrapali Jewels**

On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **WeaverStory;** Maang Tikka, Earrings, Choker, Necklace and Bangles, all **HM Diwan Jewellers**

On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **Ekaya Banaras;** Maang Tikka, Earrings, Choker, Necklace, Ring, Haath Phool and Bangles, all **Maya Sanghvi Jewels**



On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **Gaurang;** Maang Tikka, Earrings, Choker, Necklace, Bangles, Kamarband and Bajuband, all **Kundan Jewellers**
On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **Gaurang;** Earrings, Choker, Necklace, Ring, Bangles and Kamarband, all **Kundan Jewellers**



On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **Gaurang;** Maang Tikka, Earrings, Choker, Necklace, Ring, Bangles, Kamarband and Bajuband, all **Kundan Jewellers**

On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **House Of Raisons;** Earrings and Hair Chain, **Kundan Jewellers**
On Krishita: Sari and Blouse, **House Of Raisons;** Earrings, Choker, Hair Chain, Necklace and Bangles, all **Kundan Jewellers**

On Sana: Sari and Blouse, **Ekaya Banaras;** Earrings, Choker, Necklace, Ring and Bangles, all **Maya Sanghvi Jewels**

Models: Sana Thampi and Krishita Shetty
Hair & Makeup: Akanksha Singh and Virja Mehta
Fashion Assistants: Shubham Jawanjal, Chaitanya Balwant, Ankur Pathak and Charvee Patil
Production: Studio Little Dumpling

WOVEN IN TRADITION

As much as we'd love to drape ourselves in freshly crafted designer bridalwear, the emotional power of heirlooms is unparalleled. Be it saris, lehengas or jewellery, brides take pride and pleasure in carrying vintage pieces from their grandmothers' trunk to the mandap. Five top couturiers share precisely how they reinvent and modernise heirloom pieces to make this happen.

By AAKANKSHA JAIN

While the world of bridal fashion offers an array of looks from top designers and luxury brands, the sentiments and nostalgia associated with family heirlooms is unmatched. In a world constantly in flux, heirlooms allow us to pause, reflect and carry the past into our future with grace, elegance and meaning. For brides and grooms-to-be, embracing heirloom fashion is the perfect way to bridge the past and present with "something borrowed" that's wrapped in history, emotion and a timeless sense of belonging. However, these garments often require subtle reinventions and tweaks to align with current aesthetics. Five top fashion design luminaries, who seek a balance between tradition and contemporaneity, share how they transform vintage pieces into modern masterpieces.

AN EXTRAORDINARY HERITAGE

RITU KUMAR

For designer Ritu Kumar, true heirlooms are anchored in heritage craftsmanship, intricate weaves and the rich traditions of Indian textiles. Hand-embroidered details, classic motifs and traditional crafts like *chikankari* and *kantha* ensure that a piece remains just as exquisite even decades later.

"Heirlooms are woven with sentiment," she says. "A sari or *lehenga* passed down through generations is more than just fabric — here, the bride carries history."

Ritu Kumar believes in the transformative power of styling, where a vintage *Banarasi dupatta* can be draped over a structured dress, or an ancestral *lehenga* can be paired with a minimalist, contemporary blouse.

"The beauty of heirloom fashion lies in its adaptability," explains the veteran designer, who believes repurposing vintage textiles into structured jackets, or even accessories, ensures they remain relevant while honouring their origins. "We create pieces meant to be cherished and passed down through generations," she adds.

EXQUISITE EXPRESSION

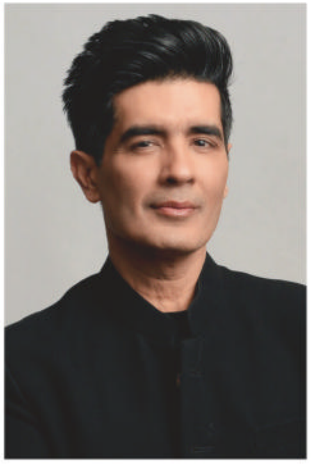
MANISH MALHOTRA

A maestro of marrying luxury and tradition, Manish Malhotra views heirloom fashion as the antithesis to fast fashion. His designs often celebrate this philosophy by reinterpreting heritage pieces with a contemporary edge, ensuring they remain relevant without losing their original charm.

"More than the design, it's the sentiment behind it and the stories woven into every thread that make it worthy of passing down," he shares.

Brides often approach Manish with vintage ensembles from their mothers or grandmothers, hoping to refresh and reinterpret them for their special day.

His creative process involves delicate restoration, transforming them into modern silhouettes, or even embroidering personal messages into the fabric to make the piece more intimate. For him, fashion is at its most meaningful when it carries history while embracing individuality. By incorporating heirlooms into contemporary bridalwear, he allows wearers to not only honour their ancestry but also create new memories, whether it's reviving an age-old *zardozi lehenga* or transforming a vintage *dupatta* into an accessory that makes a statement.



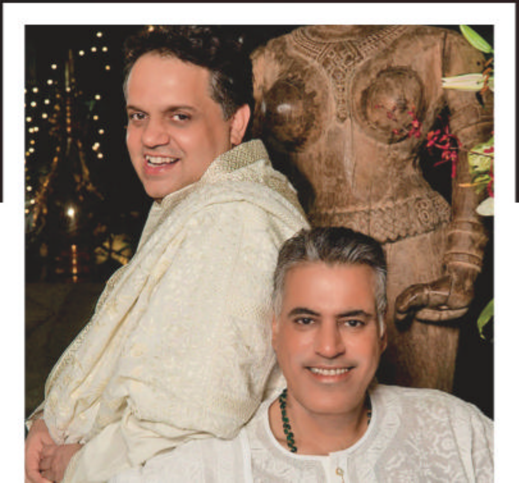
MODERN ROYALTY

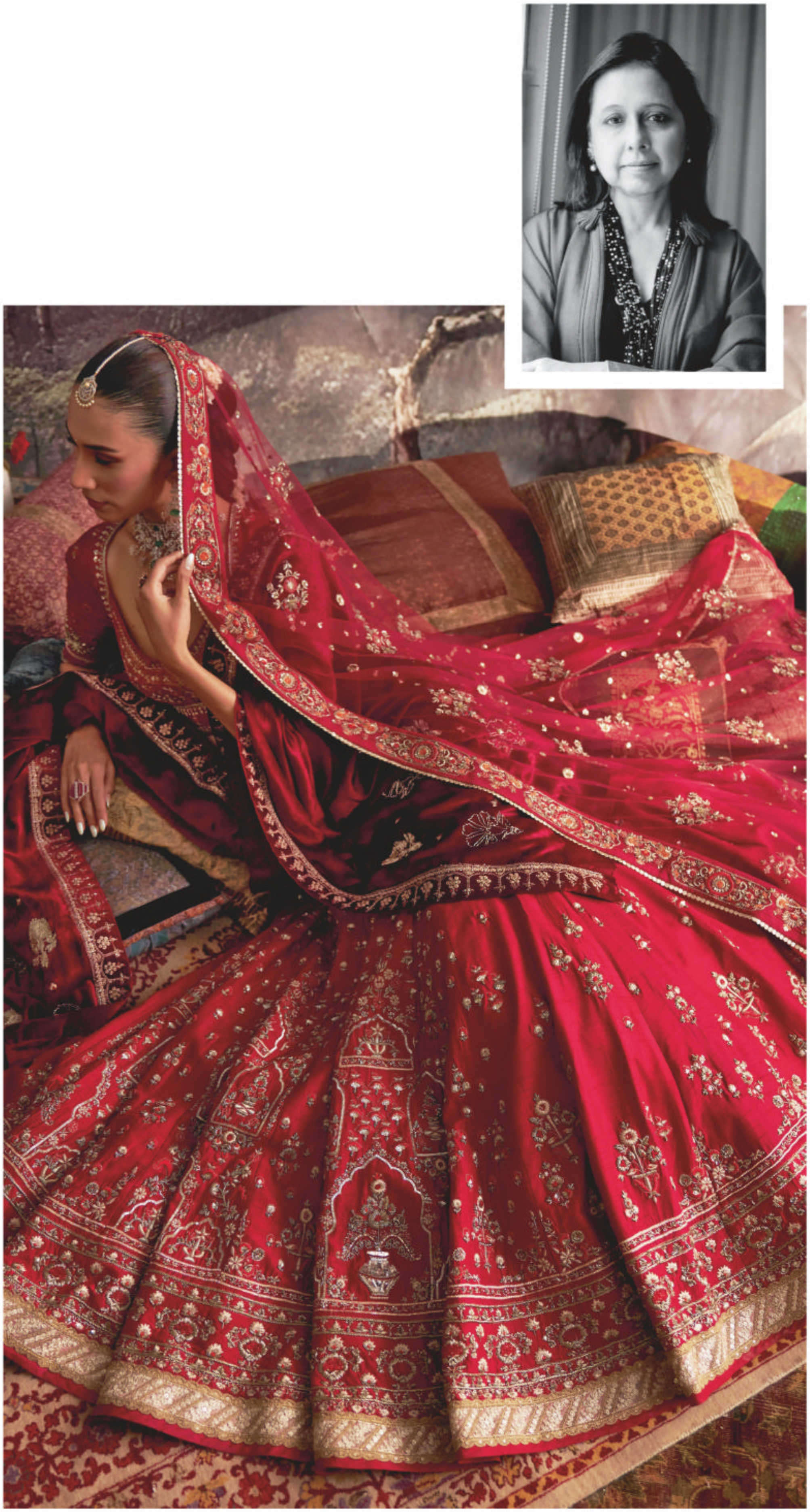
ABU JANI SANDEEP KHOSLA

"A true heirloom piece must be a classic — never a fleeting seasonal trend — and an enduring work of art, says designer duo Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla. With designs that reflect a deep respect for heritage, blending traditional Indian textiles with artisanal techniques and a sense of grandeur, Abu-Sandeep believe heirloom pieces weave generational connections and symbolise the unbreakable bond between parents and children. They often work with families to revive old pieces, retaining their original essence while subtly reimagining them for the modern wearer.

By repurposing vintage pieces — be it pairing an heirloom sari with a statement blouse or accessorising a traditional *lehenga* with contemporary couture elements — they show how legacy pieces can be reinvented while honouring their soul. Also, the shift towards donning heirloom garments and jewellery, they say, reflects the growing understanding of the perils of fast fashion among consumers.

"Heirlooms are a powerful way of recycling the old and paying homage to slow fashion," say Abu-Sandeep. "The more we wear and reuse our clothes, the more we respect sustainability and value slow fashion."





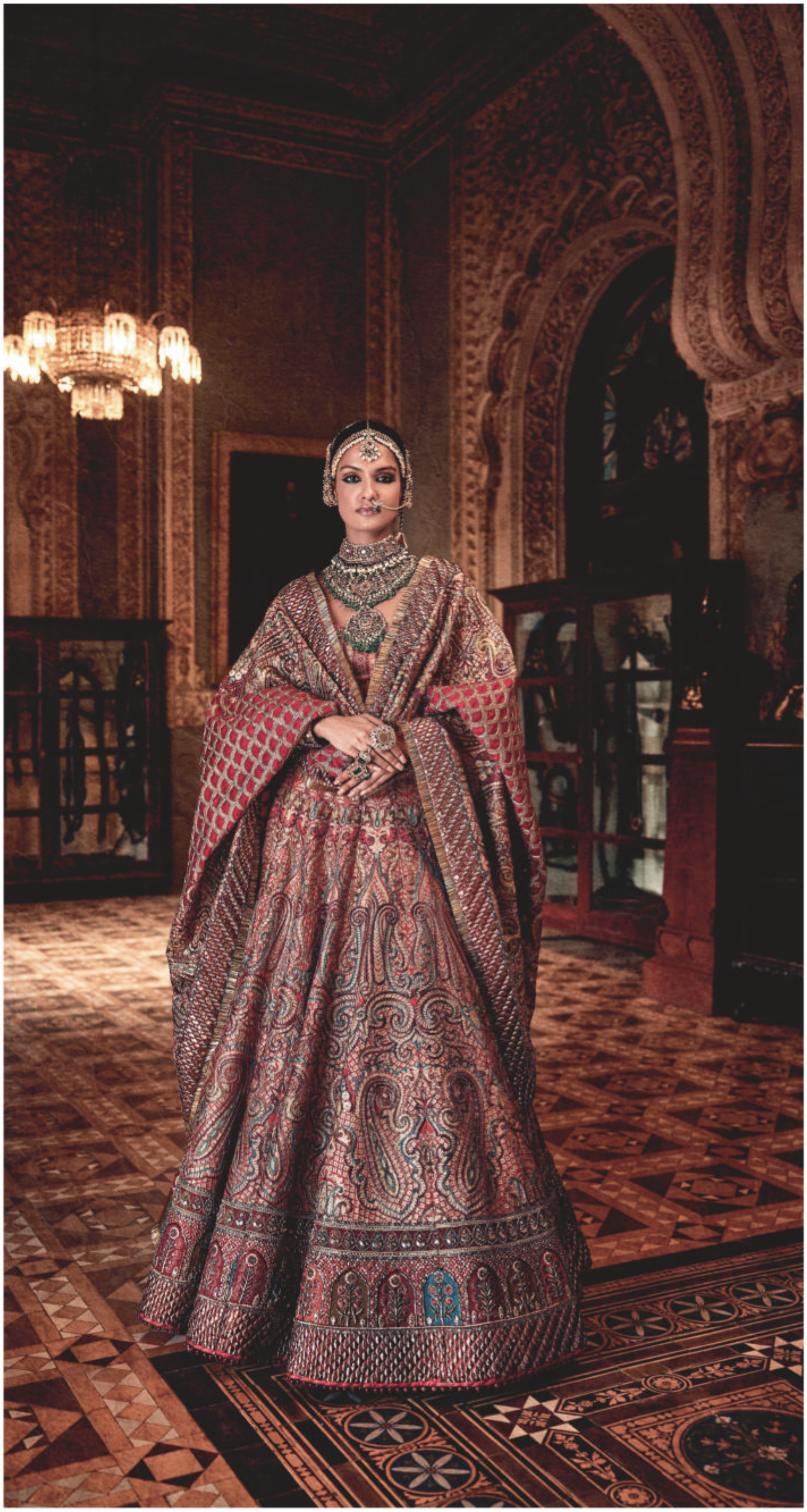
TIMELESS CHARM

ANJU MODI

When you drape ensembles once worn by your loved ones, you're wrapping yourself in their stories, love and blessings, says designer Anju Modi. Heirloom fashion is the opposite of passing trends — it's timeless, meaningful and deeply personal. True craftsmanship allows a piece of garment rooted in tradition to evolve from a sari into a *lehenga,* or a *dupatta* into a cherished shawl.

Integrating heirloom pieces into modern fashion, she adds, is about preserving their soul while giving them a fresh perspective. A vintage *Banarasi* sari, for instance, can be styled with a contemporary, structured blouse or draped in an unconventional way to add a modern edge. An old *zardozi dupatta* can be repurposed into a jacket or a cape, layered over a minimalist ensemble for contrast. Even something as simple as reworking an heirloom *lehenga* with a lighter, fluid silhouette or pairing it with modern accessories can make it feel new while keeping its essence intact.

Preserving heirloom pieces involves care, patience and respect for craftsmanship. She explains, "I've learned a few secret tricks to keep them looking as beautiful as ever: always store them in a cool, dry place, wrapped in muslin or soft cotton to allow them to breathe. When unfolding or refolding, do so carefully to prevent fabric stress and creasing in the same places over time. Use natural repellents like neem leaves or cloves to keep insects away... With the right care, these garments don't just survive time — they carry forward the love and memories of generations."



SPLENDID LEGACY

JJ VALAYA

A stalwart in Indian couture, JJ Valaya brings a distinctive perspective to heirloom fashion, one that seamlessly intertwines luxury, legacy and generational storytelling. Over three decades old in the industry, he believes true luxury is not merely about extravagance but about timelessness — the ability of a piece to endure across generations. For him, heirlooms are symbols of continuity, carrying tradition and craftsmanship into the future while allowing each wearer to add their own chapter to the story.

"For anything to be classified as pure luxury, it has to have a high degree of timelessness," he explains. "The pieces we create must stand the test of time in terms of material quality, workmanship and artistry."

Valaya often encounters second-generation clients who bring their parents' wedding ensembles, hoping to repurpose them for their own nuptials. For him, this practice is the ultimate validation of his design ethos.

Also, in today's on-the-go world, Valaya views heirloom fashion as a way to pause, reflect and honour where we come from, encouraging brides to embrace these timeless pieces as their "something borrowed" to infuse their wedding day with history, sentiment and a personal touch of the highest degree. ■

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE

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countdown

THE LUXURY LEDGER

The hautest new launches from the world of fashion, beauty, jewellery and more.

By HUNAR BHATIA

A SEPIA-TONED SOIRÉE

Designer Anavila Misra unveiled her latest collection 'Sarmast' in Hyderabad. The showcase was a poetic homage to the city's timeless mystique, artistic opulence, and soulful grace. A scene straight out of a sepia-toned era, saris rubbed shoulders with Mary Janes and embroidered skirts displayed their own love language. Bright reds, sea-greens and violets enjoyed the spotlight alongside the subtle beauty of pearls. Hosted at The Leela Hyderabad, the presentation was followed by a warm and welcoming soirée, attended by the who's who of the city. The evening also saw the first formal Indian retail debut of Anavila's home line.

FOR LUXE, LUSCIOUS LIPS

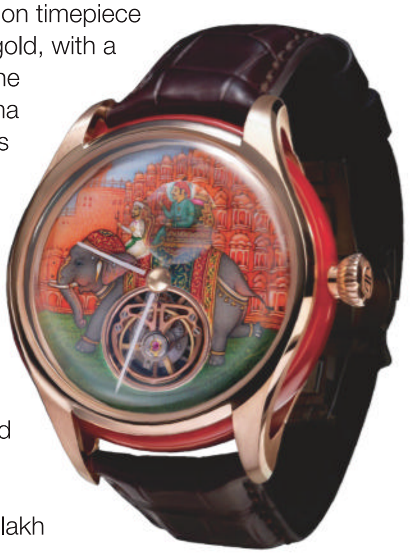
Louis Vuitton has officially ventured into the luxury beauty industry with its debut collection — La Beauté — featuring 55 LV Rouge lipsticks (satin and matte finishes), 10 LV Baume tinted lip balms, and eight eyeshadow palettes. Developed under the direction of renowned makeup artist Pat McGrath, the collection exudes luxurious craftsmanship and sustainable practices with refillable products encased in collectible, elite packaging. Featuring the signature LV monogram and Damier motifs, the lipsticks and balms are priced at $160 each, whereas the eyeshadow palettes retail at $250.

EAST MEETS WEST

In a recent amalgamation of Italian craftsmanship and Indian aesthetics, luxury footwear maison Rene Caovilla has collaborated with couturier Gaurav Gupta to curate a seven-piece capsule of custom-made heels. Each pair transcends the boundaries of fashion to expressions of art and modern heirlooms. Entailing a meticulous blend of authentic Indian textiles, traditional embroidery and crystal work, the collection — rich in design, material and construction — speaks to the woman of today while channelling Gaurav Gupta's sculptural couture spirit.

A JAIPUR GEM

Honouring 225 years of Jaipur's famous Hawa Mahal, Nebula by Titan has etched it in horological history with their latest timepiece, Jalsa. This rare tourbillon timepiece is crafted in 18-karat gold, with a miniature painting of the iconic marvel by Padma Shri Shakir Ali. Besides natural gemstone pigments and centuries-old techniques along with unique features that pay homage to the Pink City, the watch boasts a red agate and a magnifying sapphire glass on the minute hand. Priced at ₹40.5 lakh and limited to only 10 pieces, this watch is a collector's dream.

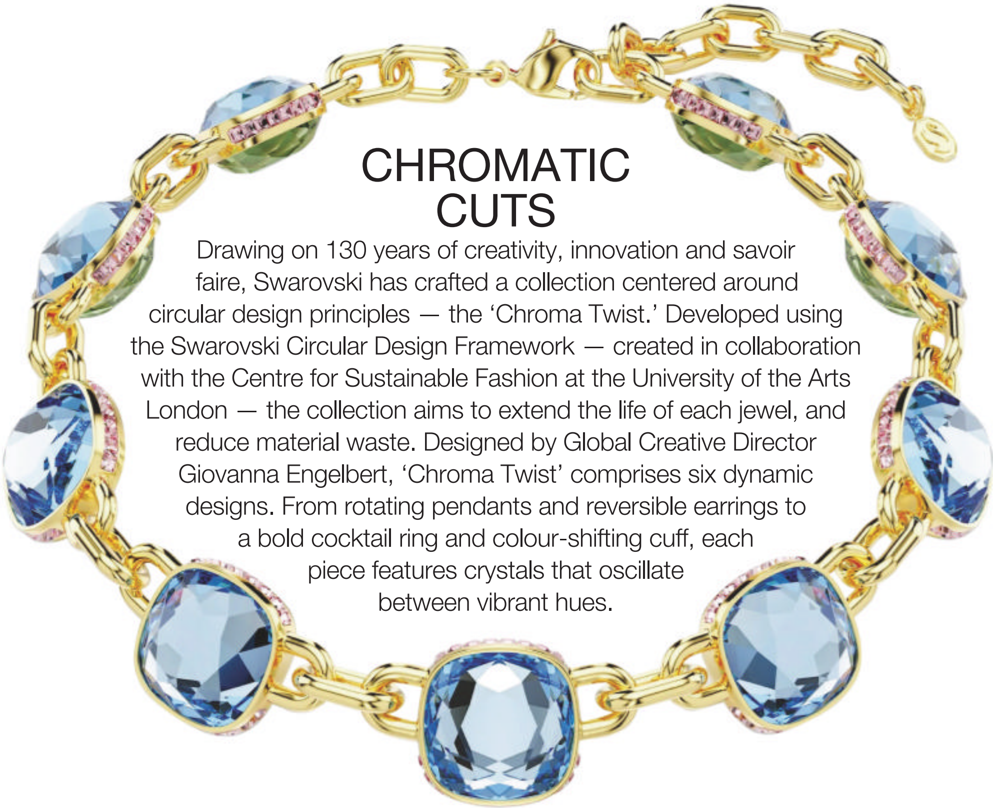


CONSCIOUS COUTURE

Aza, one of India's finest luxury fashion destinations, has launched Araiya by Aza, a fine jewellery brand of lab-grown diamonds that add a touch of sparkle to everyday moments. Founded by Dr. Alka Nishar in 2005, Aza's stores in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Surat, and Ahmedabad are a sartorial paradise for both the bride and the groom. Moreover, the brand has expanded their footprint to over 200 countries with the launch of their e-commerce platform, which features curated collections from over a 1,000 designers.

ILLUMINATING TRINKETS

Redefining the art of accessories for social gatherings, Nemichand Bamalwa Jewellers, in Salt Lake, Kolkata, have unveiled their latest collection — 'Illumina.' Bringing forth a balance between edgy and elegance, 'Illumina' offers bold, modern silhouettes that embody an opulent blend of natural diamonds, *polkis*, emeralds, rubies and more. The collection comprises statement earrings, sparkling chokers, rings and bracelets. Creating a unique interplay of light, texture, and form, 'Illumina' celebrates the modern, impeccably stylish woman.

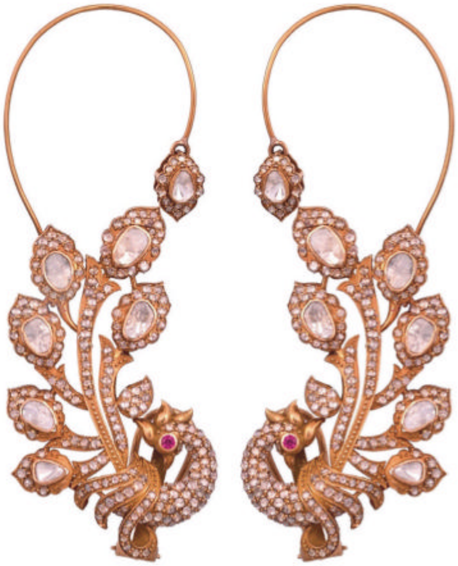


CHROMATIC CUTS

Drawing on 130 years of creativity, innovation and savoir faire, Swarovski has crafted a collection centered around circular design principles — the 'Chroma Twist.' Developed using the Swarovski Circular Design Framework — created in collaboration with the Centre for Sustainable Fashion at the University of the Arts London — the collection aims to extend the life of each jewel, and reduce material waste. Designed by Global Creative Director Giovanna Engelbert, 'Chroma Twist' comprises six dynamic designs. From rotating pendants and reversible earrings to a bold cocktail ring and colour-shifting cuff, each piece features crystals that oscillate between vibrant hues.

BEJEWELLED ELEGY

An ode to nature with the spotlight on birds and other lifelike silhouettes, P.C. Totuka & Sons have unveiled their latest collection. Each fluid piece is moulded to embody lightness, translating the finer details into a showcase of grace and strength. Every design bears rare gemstones like uncut diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, each chosen to enhance the depth of the creations. These pieces are ideal expressions of one's personality, crafted with the intent to make memories.



ARM CANDIES

Introducing their festive collection just in time for the season, Charles & Keith has aced the arm candy arsenal once again. Drenched in dazzling crystals, their standout hues for the season remain in gilded gold and metallic silvers. Whether carried by hand or styled in eccentric ways, these statement accessories are guaranteed to leave a lasting impression. Offering a blend of glamour and practicality, these bags transform effortlessly from shoulder carry to chic dumpling wristlets. This season, the message is clear: more is more, and shine is everything.

BIJOUTERIE BAGS

Reinterpreting the vanity cases of the Roaring ’20s with a contemporary twist, Cartier has unveiled a capsule collection of four limited-edition jewellery valises. Inspired by flora, the bags feature geometric cylindrical and spherical shapes, crafted with elements like cabochon-set clasps and suede-lined interiors. Each bag showcases Cartier’s exceptional savoir faire. A rich blend of solid colours for the base and vibrant jewelled trinkets as adornments, these bags promise to dazzle, whatever the occasion may be.

LOUIS VUITTON TAPS INDIAN CRAFTSMANSHIP

Louis Vuitton’s Spring-Summer 2026 Men’s collection, ‘India to Paris,’ is an ode to our country’s craftsmanship. The showstopper on the runway was the Malle Courier 110, designed by Pharrell Williams, which carried the noble traditions of the house’s workmanship, and the savoir faire of their iconic Courrier Lozine 110 trunk. Entailing a rich and sophisticated embellished hard case that protects plush interiors, the Malle Courier 110 trunk is, indeed, a collector’s item.

LOUIS VUITTON

A GILDED BOUTIQUE

Adding another address to their repository, Madanji Meghraj Jewellers have inaugurated their newest showroom in Bengaluru. A tribute to South India's deep-rooted love for traditional gold jewellery, the location showcases intricately handcrafted pieces, including temple jewellery, antique gold bridal sets, and *kasu mala*, among others. "Our new store in Bengaluru is more than just a space — it's a celebration of elegance and legacy," says Mahendra Jhaveri, Director at Madanji Meghraj Jewellers. "Experience a world of rare gold and diamond creations, where every piece is a work of art."

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

In the third collaboration of its kind, 'Sahiban'25: An Untold Story of Love' brings together Needledust and Abhinav Mishra, artfully merging their individual aesthetics. Crafted by a brand renowned for reimagining *juttis* and a designer known for exquisite mirror work, the collection comprises eclectic footwear designs, innovative accessories and evolved styles for both men and women, as well as macro and micro bags in striking new shapes. In these products, embroidery enjoys the spotlight on rich fabrics like Indian silk and tissue on blush and muted tones.

mrunalini rao

A FESTIVE FAVOURITE

Mrunalini Rao has added an elegant touch to Ambawatta One in Mehrauli, Delhi, with her first flagship store in the city. The boutique is designed to blend the richness of Indian craftsmanship with the brand's heritage and contemporary flair, with warm interiors that exude an old-world charm. Close on the heels of the festive season, Mrunalini also unveiled a luminous new collection. From elaborate *shararas* to layered *lehengas* and capes, each ensemble boasts intricate *zardozi* work, pearls, and their signature paisley motif.

WHERE PRÊT MEETS COUTURE

Designer Elisha Wadhwani inaugurated her flagship store at Dhan Mill, New Delhi, with a new Autumn/Winter '25 collection titled 'Awakening.' Reinterpreting Indian craftsmanship through a bold, modern lens, the collection features crystal embellishments, intricate *zardozi* embroidery, and revived *chikankari* on an emotive palette of royal blue, wine, and deep purple — perfect for winter evenings and the celebratory warmth of the festive season. The store is divided in two segments — the first has on display luxury prêt wear, offering structured yet feminine silhouettes, organza shirts elevated with patented applique work, as well as metallic chantilly lace power suits; the second showcases the couture range, including saris and *lehengas* in jewel tones that fuse timelessness with modern structure.

SUNEET VARMA
SUNEET VARMA

A NEW DELHI DELIGHT

Framed by the Qutub Minar, Suneet Varma's new store in Delhi pays tribute to both the city and the future of couture retail through its immersive ambiance where heritage meets glamour. Unveiled at Kutub Boulevard, Mehrauli, it embodies the designer's three-decade journey of couture, craft, and timeless romance. Adorned with bevelled mirrors, artful chandeliers, and elegant interiors, the store captures the essence of the SV bride — glamorous and confident, yet rooted in tradition. "This store is my love letter to Delhi, where my story began, and where so many of our brides' stories unfold," shares Suneet.

OF FLAGSHIPS & COUTURE BAGS

Couturier Rahul Mishra has opened his largest, most ambitious flagship store yet in Mumbai's Kala Ghoda. Spanning 7,500 sqft, the store — designed in collaboration with Rooshad Shroff — marries fashion, craft, and architecture. Adding to his sartorial universe, the designer has also launched a new collection of couture bags, 'Handmade in India.' These offer yet another artistic take on his constant muse, nature. The range features bags in silk and fine full-grain leather, exquisitely adorned with intricate hand embroidery and gold-plated embellishments. ■

NEW YORK BOM COM

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LOVE, ACTUALLY

From bonding over romantic comedies to living in one themselves, Palak Kapadia and Aarjav Jain tied the knot in a fairytale Mumbai wedding. After confessing their love just two dates in, they walked down the aisle in a celebration that was as heartfelt as it was cinematic. The couple shares their story...

A CULMINATION OF THE SUN & SEA

Just like a love that was meant to be, for Palak Kapadia and Aarjav Jain, it was one written for the pages.

As Palak shares, "Our love came crashing in like a wave — unexpected yet inevitable. It was a force that knocked us off our feet and swept us up into something greater than ourselves."

Exuding that feeling of serendipity, their *haldi* was rooted in symbolism. Drawing from the coasts of Southern Italy, the ceremony brought together nautical elements like rustic wooden crates and lanterns, all with an Indian twist.

An ode to the ocean, the couple wore outfits in a shade of zesty lime. While the bride was dressed in a fusion Indian outfit — traditional *dhoti*-style draped pants with a matching crop top and blazer, the

groom was dapper in a traditional ecru kurta with a scarf in the same bright hue.

"Both our outfits were embroidered with tiny mirrors — a nod to my Gujarati heritage," she adds.

MAKING MEMORIES

Spanning meaningful traditions, romantic gestures and profound installations that mirrored their story, the celebration was nothing short of a fairy tale.

"I wanted our *sangeet* to be reminiscent of our impromptu night of dancing at a New York City dive bar," she recalls, "where I realised I wanted to marry Aarjav."

The venue was draped in slinky silver and midnight blue fabrics, enhanced by white flowers and mirror balls strung from the arches. A silver-and-mahogany installation at the entrance was completed with a neon sign to serve as a backdrop for the strip photo booth. After all, what's a dive bar without one?

For the occasion, Palak glowed in a silver *sharara* embroidered with pearls, paired with complementing pearl-strapped sandals. Aarjav wore a midnight blue *bandhgala* teamed with brown suede loafers.

THE ROM-COM

Their story, which began while they were still abroad, culminated in a celebration steeped in cultured nuances and shared festivities.

"And finally, D-day arrived," she reflects. "Walking down the aisle in a classic red *lehenga,* paired with Louboutin Ginko sandals and a 15ft custom veil, felt like poetry in motion — fitting, as I walked to the words of *Raabta*, a poem I had written about the inexplicable connection of two souls."

Aarjav, on the other hand, was regal in an ivory *sherwani*. He arrived on horseback, upholding the timeless tradition of the Indian groom.

With the Arabian Sea playing the perfect backdrop, their sundowner wedding was bathed in coral and pink florals with gilded mirrors, flickering chandeliers, and ceramic vases.

As the night progressed, Palak changed into a silver and white ensemble with personalised lace and pearls, and Aarjav embraced classic elegance in a tuxedo.

"Having been a Jimmy Choo girl for more than a decade, there couldn't have possibly been a better shoe for our first foray into the world as married partners," she concludes.

THE DETAILS

Bride's Wardrobe: Kalki and Prada (*haldi*); Tarun Tahiliani and Chanel (*sangeet*); Kalki and Christian Louboutin (wedding); Seema Gujral and Jimmy Choo (reception)

Groom's Wardrobe: Custom made for the *haldi, sangeet* and wedding; Johnston Murphy shoes for the *sangeet*; Suit Supply for the reception

Venue: Hotel Sea Princess, Juhu, Mumbai

Wedding planners: Vogue Events & Entertainment

Photographer: Three Little Words

Makeup: Shruti Kode

Hairstylist: Shivani Shettye

Band: Shashank Dwivedi

Choreographer: Mitali Sonar

Social Media: The Insta Shaadi

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BREAKING NEWS

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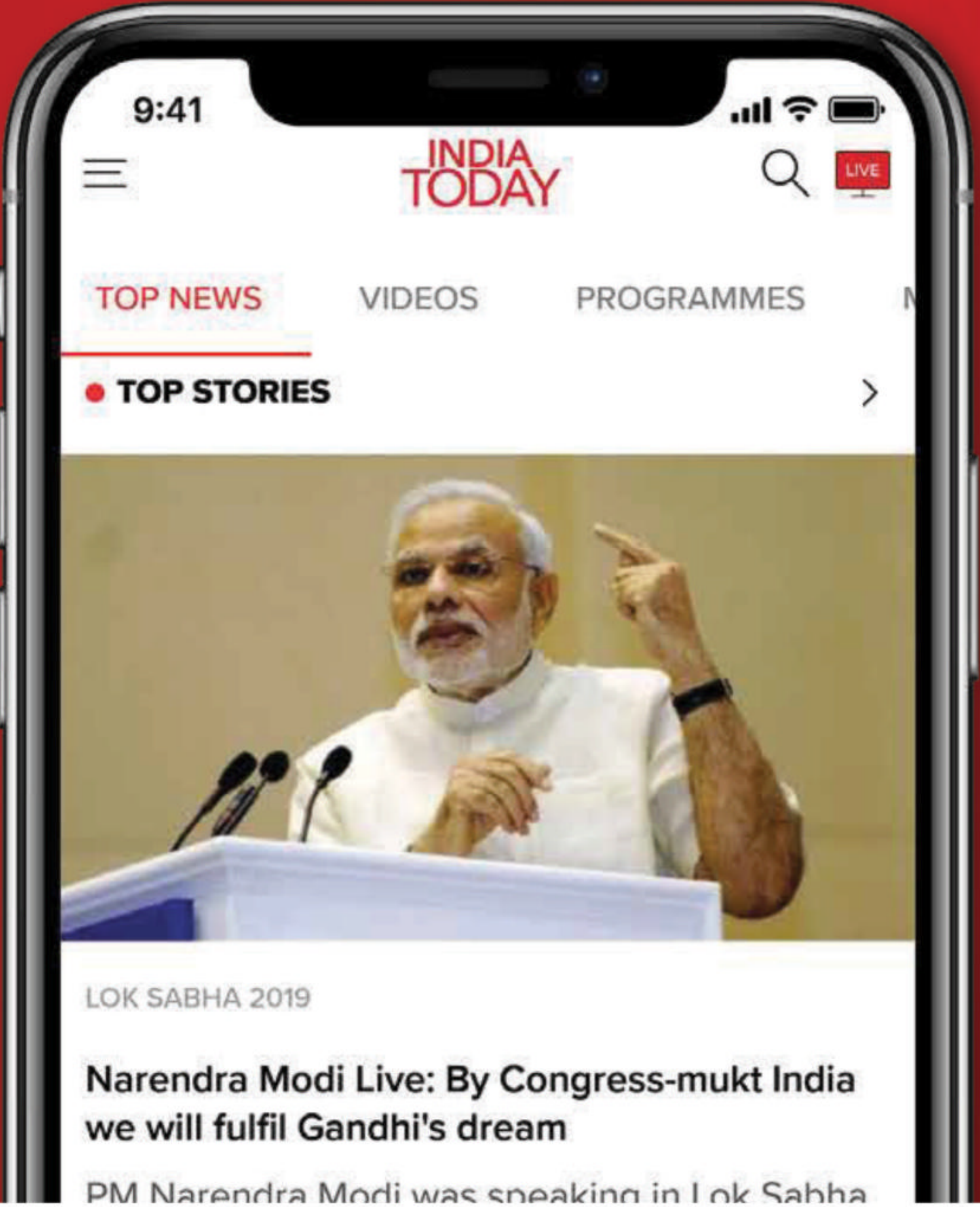
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Narendra Modi Live: By Congress-mukt India we will fulfil Gandhi's dream

PM Narendra Modi was speaking in Lok Sabha

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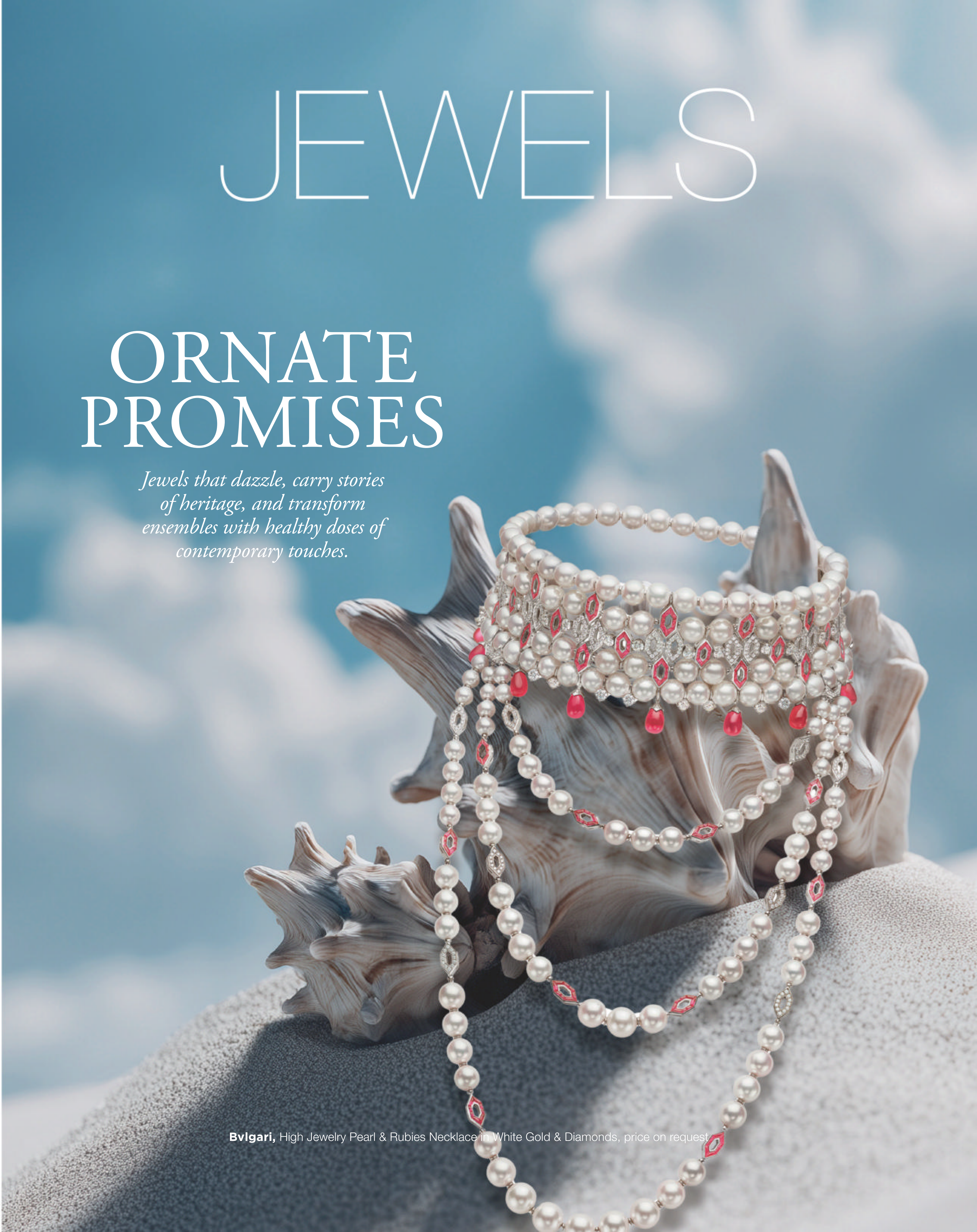
JEWELS

ORNATE PROMISES

Jewels that dazzle, carry stories of heritage, and transform ensembles with healthy doses of contemporary touches.



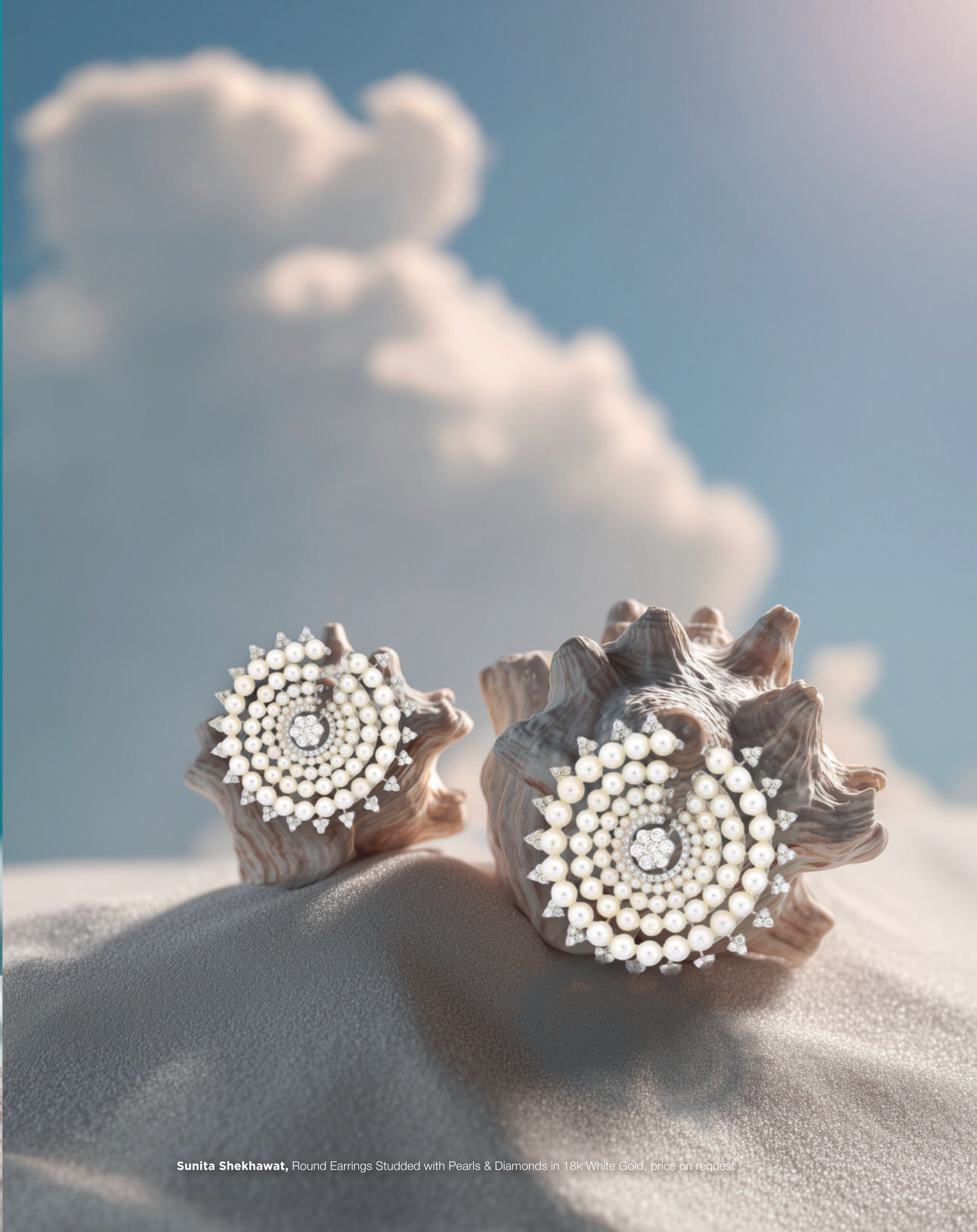
Bvlgari, High Jewelry Pearl & Rubies Necklace in White Gold & Diamonds, price on request

PEARL JAM

From intricate chokers to statement rings, these timeless stones draw the eye in every avatar.

Illustrations by TANYA CHATURVEDI
Compiled by ANKITA MALHOTRA

Gucci, Interlocking Pearl Bracelet, price on request



Sunita Shekhawat, Round Earrings Studded with Pearls & Diamonds in 18k White Gold, price on request

Amaris, Monarch Pearl Earrings, price on request

Ribbons Jewellery, Eternal Pearl Ring, price on request

Louis Vuitton, Collier Protection - Virtuosity Collection, price on request

WEAVING HEIRLOOMS

Guided by over two decades of dedication to Indian craftsmanship, Vidhi Singhania has reimagined bridalwear through her latest collection that honours heritage while serving modern looks

For every bride, her trousseau is more than just clothing — it's a treasury of memories, heritage, and timeless style. This season, Vidhi Singhania has designed a collection ideal for any trousseau, as it celebrates the grandeur of Indian weddings while embracing the artistry of India's revered handloom.

A textile exponent, her work revolves around rich, textured weaves, honoured through the power of couture. Over the past two decades, Vidhi has worked closely with the master weavers of Kota and Banaras, providing them with sustainable livelihoods and platforms to showcase their artistry.

In keeping with her passion, her Fall/Winter collection is all about exquisite Banarasi saris — each handwoven and bearing motifs that are both classic and contemporary, making them perfect for brides, mothers, and sisters alike. For the bride who wishes to shine beyond convention, the highlight is the new gold *lehenga* — heavily woven with gold *zari*, yet astonishingly lightweight, showcasing the unmatched magic of handloom. Bringing respite to brides in temperate climates, the collection offers Kota tissue embroidered saris woven in real gold *zari* — ethereal and airy, like wearing a priceless heirloom.

Completing the festive repertoire are skirts, velvet jackets, *dupattas*, shawls, *potlis* and trousseau boxes with thoughtful accents that add depth, layering, and additions that elevate bridal accompaniments. For the woman who desires more than fashion, who seeks heritage reinterpreted for today, designs in the festive collection of Vidhi's eponymous label are heirlooms in the making, crafted to be cherished, worn, and passed on.

At the core of all the brand's work lies Indian craftsmanship — *gota pattis, leheriyas,* immaculate *batiks*, block printing and embroideries — united with the upliftment of the weavers who work on the garments. Vidhi's efforts to revive the handloom tradition have been admired by many. A recipient of the International Women's Entrepreneurial Awards, bestowed by Indian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI-FLO), she's also a veteran of the Fashion Design Council of India and a board member of the Arts & Culture Committee and FICCI.

Bvlgari Mangalsutra Sautoir Necklace, price on request

THE MODERN MANGALSUTRA

An enduring symbol of a marriage, this traditional ornament has evolved into an everyday style statement, no longer confined to a black-beaded chain. Jewellers explain how the mangalsutra finds expression in varied contemporary forms today — from bracelets and rings, to earrings — while keeping the sentiment intact.

By SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY

The *mangalsutra* is far more than just jewellery. Debates around patriarchy aside, it remains a traditional symbol of union that holds emotional value to the wearer. Today, however, this sentiment finds new forms of expressions in contemporary designs that exceed the boundaries of just a chain around the neck.

"The classic *mangalsutra* will always remain significant for weddings and festive occasions, but contemporary brides and fashion-conscious women are increasingly drawn to lighter, minimal, and versatile formats," explains Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director of Candere by Kalyan Jewellers.

Picture delicate chains with chic pendants, stylish bracelets, and even rings and earrings bearing the signature black beads, along with motifs like the infinity sign, butterflies, initials, evil eyes, and florals. *Mangalsutras* that double as bracelets, reversible pendants, and layered ones that can be worn as single strands or combined are in demand, as well.

Angara
Evil Eye Blue Sapphire and Lab-Grown Diamond Mangalsutra, ₹78,332

Candere by Kalyan Jewellers
Garvari Diamond Mangalsutra, ₹55,221

"*Mangalsutra* necklets — mini necklaces with beads — are also popular for festive and religious occasions," says Meghna Jhaveri, Director – Design & Merchandise at CaratLane. "This versatility offers more value and wearable options than a single piece, making it a contemporary essential."

REIMAGINED, NOT REPLACED

While regional designs like the Maharashtrian *vati*, Tamil *thali*, and Andhra *bottu* remain timeless, international jewellery trends have infused clean lines in the Indian design aesthetic, and the *mangalsutra* has evolved with it to embody a dialogue between global minimalism and regional symbolism.

"You'll now see lighter chains, geometric pendants, and modern diamond settings like solitaire and halo making their way into this age-old ornament," says Aditi Daga, Co-Founder of Angara. "At the same time, floral motifs, leaf patterns, and cascading beadwork inspired by South Indian and Maharashtrian traditions are being reinterpreted in sleeker, more refined ways."

Toi et Moi concepts — a set meant for both the bride and groom — are also gaining traction, sometimes incorporating their zodiac stones, adds Meghna.

THE CULTURAL SHIFT

Urban women are reshaping what a *mangalsutra* means in their lives. Once worn daily as a marker of tradition, it's no longer reserved only for ceremonies — it's evolved into an everyday style statement, a piece they want to carry into boardrooms, brunches and evenings out. This shift has had a direct impact on the craftsmanship. As a result, brides are choosing daintier pieces, minimal silhouettes, and lighter chains and pendants that slip seamlessly into a modern wardrobe, equally at home with a sari, a blazer at work and an evening dress.

"Sleek silhouettes, solitaire drops, and mixed-metal tones make the *mangalsutra* versatile enough to pair with Western wear, while reinterpreted floral and paisley motifs echo India's heritage with a modern twist through diamonds and gemstones," says Ramesh.

Aditi further explains: "It's about giving women the freedom to hold the tradition close, but in ways that feel practical, personal and deeply stylish."

Candere by Kalyan Jewellers
Special Union Diamond Mangalsutra Ring, ₹65,300

Angara
Natural Ruby Heart Knot With Natural Diamond Mangalsutra Necklace, ₹1,20,491

CaratLane
Golden Dusk Diamond Drop Earrings, ₹57,074

Candere by Kalyan Jewellers
Bhavanya Diamond Mangalsutra Oval Bracelet, ₹57,291

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Personalisation has brought a fresh intimacy to the *mangalsutra*, making it far more than a traditional ornament. What was once a uniform symbol is now becoming a deeply personal piece of jewellery that can be customised, wherein every piece becomes a keepsake that tells a unique story — from entwined initials, engraved dates, or motifs like hearts and butterflies that hold a certain significance, to the choice of gemstones and metal finishes.

"I particularly love when a bride selects a gemstone for its symbolism," says Aditi. "When something so personal is woven into the design, the *mangalsutra* stops being just tradition. It becomes her story, her style, and a piece she can wear every single day with pride."

Meghna says detachable pendants, too, are favoured, as they let women wear them with or without chains.

"These give women flexibility to make their *mangalsutra* an authentic reflection of their style," she adds.

Brides are also playing with the length of their chains, opting for shorter 16 to 18 inches over the heavier 22- to 24-inch versions that sit higher for a trendy, layerable look. They're trying unique shapes of pendants, and mixing the traditional black beads with gold, gemstones or initials. Also in vogue are solitaire *mangalsutras* — detachable and wearable with minimal black beads, gold chains, or even black diamonds.

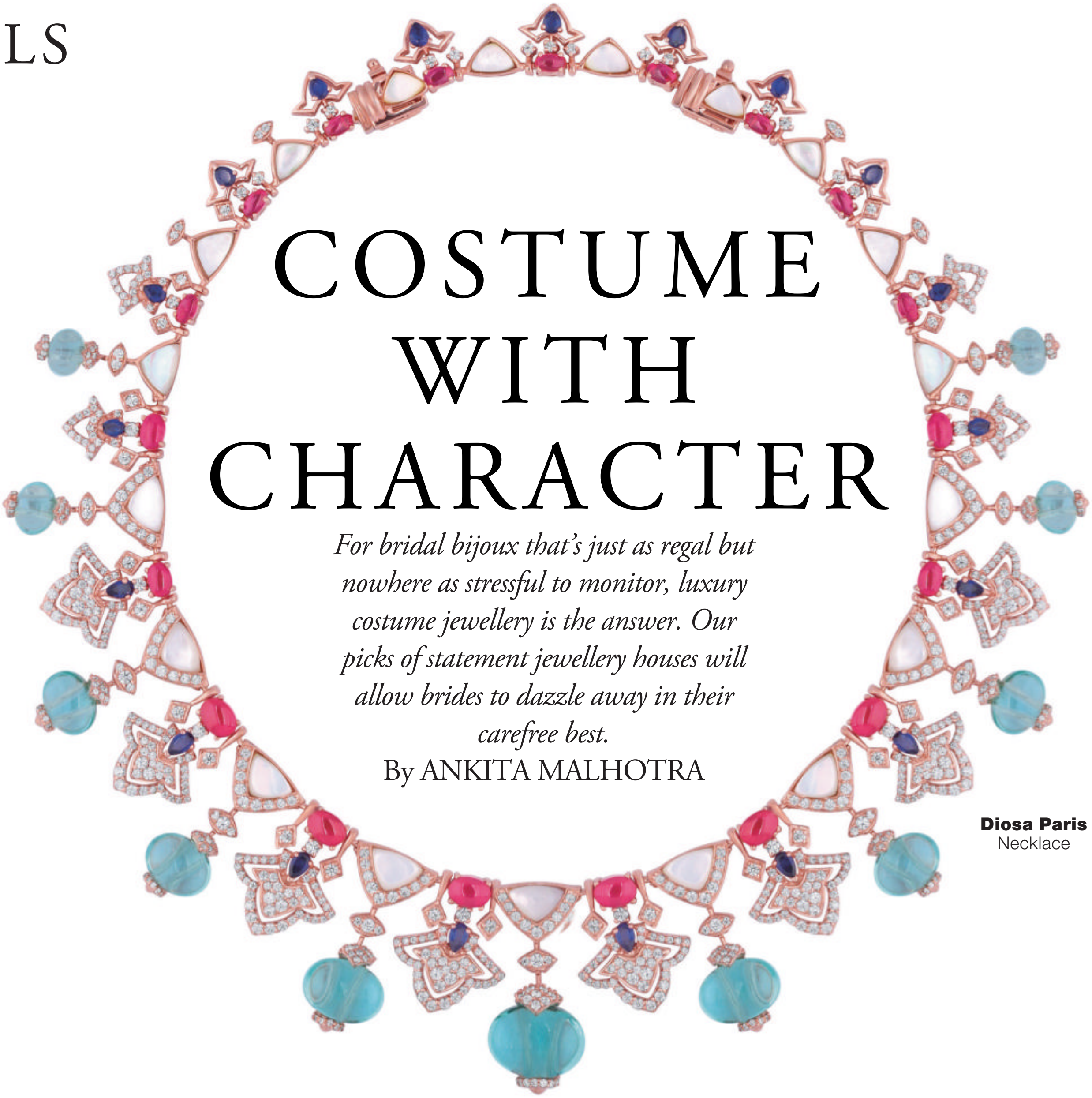
"The essence of the *mangalsutra* remains intact, but the expression has become much more personal and playful," stresses Aditi.

All in all, modern brides want their *mangalsutra* to be more than a ritual — they want it to tell their story, to move with their lifestyle, and to feel as personal as their choices in love. With this evolution, they don't dilute tradition; they make it even more meaningful. ■

COSTUME WITH CHARACTER

For bridal bijoux that's just as regal but nowhere as stressful to monitor, luxury costume jewellery is the answer. Our picks of statement jewellery houses will allow brides to dazzle away in their carefree best.

By ANKITA MALHOTRA



Diosa Paris Necklace

An inherent sense of chaos surrounds weddings. What with the need for colossal levels of planning, logistics, guest listing… Among these, jewellery serves as a major stress factor, the fear of misplacing precious heirlooms, or losing valuables in transit looming large through all celebrations. Enter: luxury costume jewellery, your passport to stress-free glamour. No matter the occasion, such luxe designs have emerged as a winsome alternative to heavy ornaments, offering all the glamour and allure, but with a fraction of the strain. For brides-to-be and guests alike, our curation of luxe costume jewellery brands will leave you spoilt for choice.

Kazhal by Gayathrie Zavveri Earrings

CONTEMPORARY EDGE

If sleek tennis bracelets, vibrant cocktail rings, and delicate floral brooches in zirconia and multi-shaped gemstones are your style, Miss Jo's contemporary designs are your answer. Their cutting-edge jewellery pieces are subtle yet standout, lightweight, and set in 92.5 sterling silver, making them complement luxe silks, satin, and even crepe. Take, for instance, their Baguette Harmony Necklace, a classic solitaire design with angular baguettes. Pair it with a cocktail dress, or team it up with a traditional ensemble — you'll attract compliments either way.

REGAL GLAMOUR

If you have a structured Indo-Western gown, a draped sari-gown, or even an embellished *sharara* in jewel tones in

INPUTS FROM: AMEERAH SINGH

Anu Merton All Jewellery

Miss Jo Jewellery Necklace

Anayah Jewellery Earrings and necklace

mind, collections by Diosa Paris could be the perfect accompaniments. Their bold cocktail rings, chandelier earrings, and sculptural cuffs crafted in 925 sterling silver and studded with precious rubies, emeralds, sapphires and pearls are ultra glamorous. One such eye-catching piece is their Yellow Pear Shaped and White Swarovski Zirconia earrings. The glimmer of the bright stones can elevate even the simplest of outfits.

ELEVATED ELEGANCE

If you're going for a Indo-Western look for a *mehndi* or *haldi*, Anayah Jewellery's demi-fine jewellery could up the ante. Pair your printed *lehenga*, cape set, or floral *sharara* with designs that come to life with cubic zirconia, polki, semi-precious stones and rhodium-plated brass. The brand's Banafsha American diamond choker set, or the Safa emerald green bracelet with pink accents can take your ensembles from drab to chic and classy.

SPARKLE CENTRAL

Every bride needs a few chic, head-turning pieces of jewellery to carry her through the post-wedding festivities — and Kazhal by Gayathrie Zavveri is ideal for all such special moments. Add some sparkle to a flowy printed kaftan, or make a ruffled sari, metallic co-ord set, or tailored jumpsuit look all the more exceptional with their Classic Earrings, handcrafted in silver and clear crystals, with a faux green central emerald crystal. Their other popular pieces feature white topaz, hydro rubies, hydro emeralds, onyx, pearls and similar colourful semi-precious stones polished with gold rhodium.

Simran Chhabra Jewels All Jewellery

ALL THAT GLITTERS

Diamonds may be a girl's best friend, but gold is forever. The gold tint is ever-shrouded in grandeur and opulence — a sentiment that Simran Chhabra Jewels understands. Their designs reimagine statement hoops, characterful pins, alphabet studs, and sculptural chokers — architectural pieces that are wearable art in 18-karat gold. The brand's Queen Bee Choker — a gold-plated brass neckpiece with delicate butterflies — could be the perfect companion for a black tailored gown. Let the gold do all the talking!

STORIES WE WEAR

For jewellery with substance and pieces that lend a narrative to everyday accessories, Anu Merton's collections may do the trick. The designer draws inspiration from Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bengaluru, Patna and other such small towns around the country to tap into traditional techniques and antique gold finishes, to fashion effortless everyday pieces. The brand's Marwar Choker — made in silver alloy with stone *polkis* and an antique gold finish — is one of their finest collections, making the wearer feel like a Rajasthani queen. ■

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SPARKLING STRANDS

2

Ornate jewels that add just the right touch of sparkle and take your hairdo up several notches.

By POOJA SINGH

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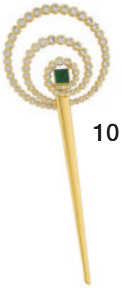
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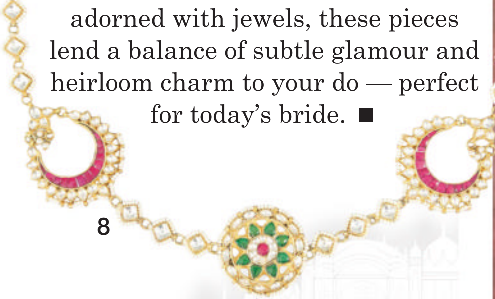
Blending age-old craftsmanship with modern elegance, hair accessories are elevating bridal fashion to new heights. From delicate pins to dramatic braids adorned with jewels, these pieces lend a balance of subtle glamour and heirloom charm to your do — perfect for today's bride. ■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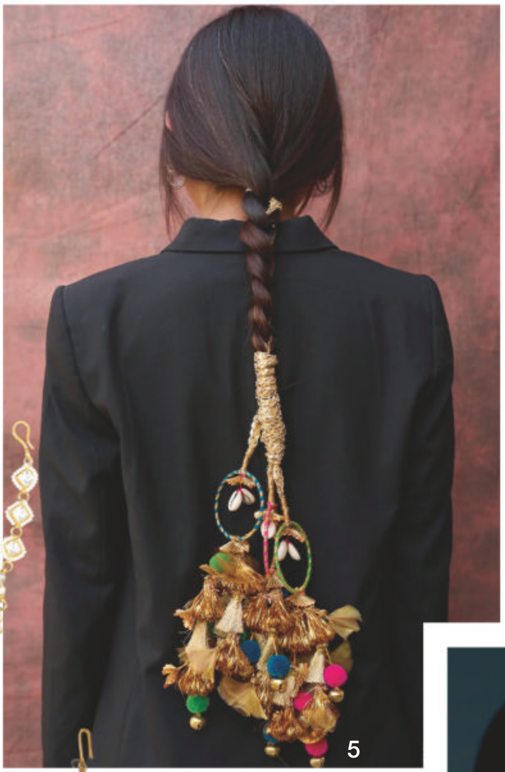
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1. **Amreli Jaipur** Gold-Plated Jadau Kundan Polki Earchains, ₹4,900. **2. Suhani Pittie** Tree Frost Pearl Hair Clips, ₹7,000. **3. Kattam** Peacock Choti Jadai Billai, ₹2,228. **4. Anatina** Chaand Sitara Hair Pins, ₹5,250. **5. Ziddi** Zalda Parandi, ₹3,200. **6. JJ Valaya** Signature Emerald Maangtika, ₹12,000. **7. RNG** Gold-Finish Pink Kemp Stone & Pearl Temple Hairclip, ₹4,000. **8. Auraa Trends** Gold-Plated Kundan Polki & Green Onyx Headband, ₹9,000. **9. Parishri** Antique Gold-Finish Bird & Floral Hair Pin, ₹2,500. **10. Isharya** Gold-Finish Hydro Emerald & Cubic Zirconia Hair Bodkin ₹6,600

PRODUCT IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE BRANDS & SHUTTERSTOCK; INPUTS BY: TRUSHIETA NARINGREKAR

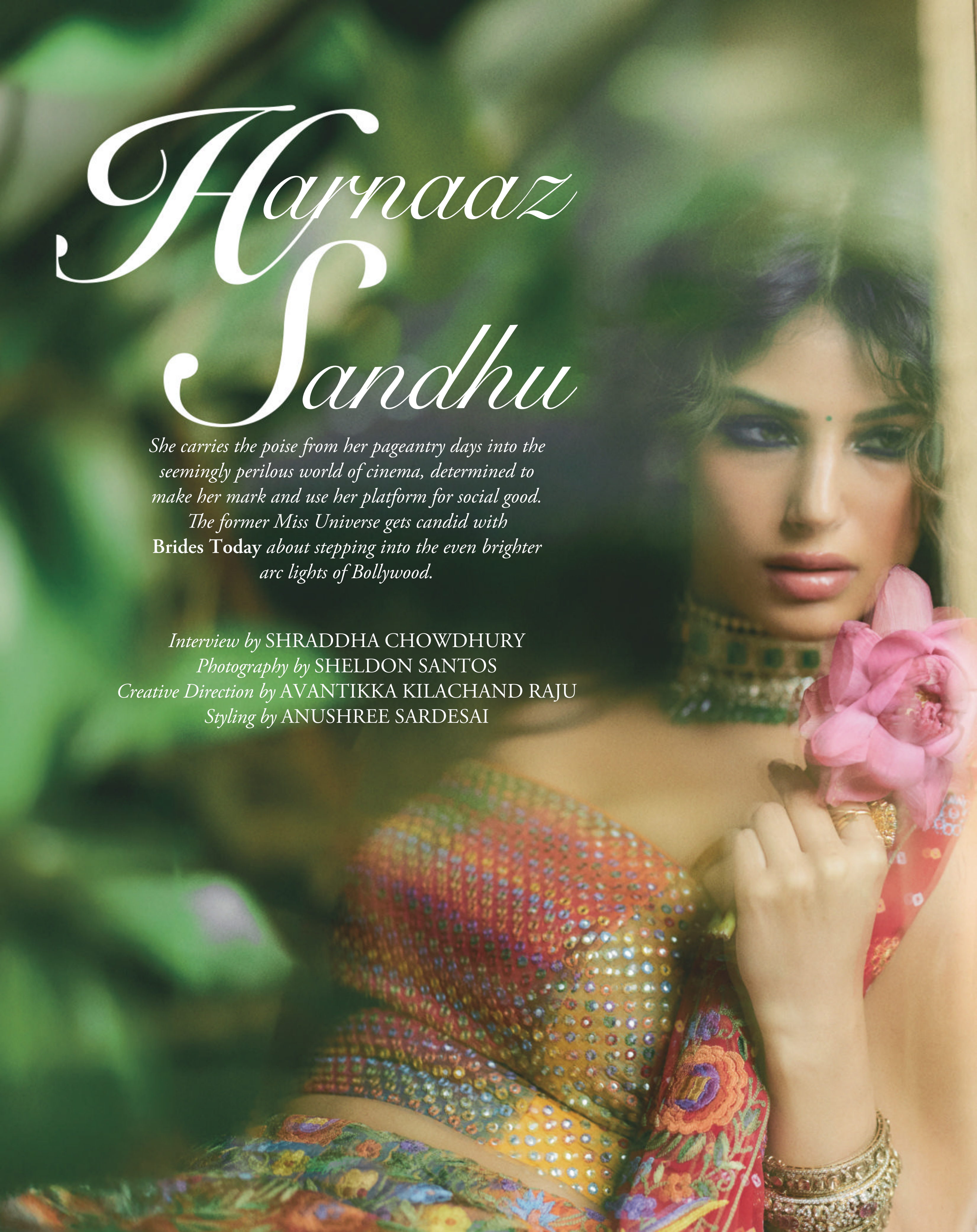
FASHION

AISLE STYLE

Harnaaz Sandhu transforms into a never-seen-before avatar, Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala and Arpita Mehta share their insights on the bridalwear market, and all the trends that emerged from India Couture Week.

Outfit: Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla
Jewellery: Jagdish Jewellers

Photography by **Sheldon Santos**
Creative Direction by **Avantikka Kilachand Raju**
Styling by **Anushree Sardesai**



Harnaaz Sandhu

She carries the poise from her pageantry days into the seemingly perilous world of cinema, determined to make her mark and use her platform for social good. The former Miss Universe gets candid with **Brides Today** *about stepping into the even brighter arc lights of Bollywood.*

Interview by SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY
Photography by SHELDON SANTOS
Creative Direction by AVANTIKKA KILACHAND RAJU
Styling by ANUSHREE SARDESAI

FROM THE CROWN TO THE CAMERA

"I want to keep using my **visibility** to spark change alongside **entertaining** through **films**"

Harnaaz Sandhu's life has been nothing short of cinematic, meandering through the quiet bylanes of Chandigarh to the dazzling spotlight of the world stage. Crowned Miss Universe in 2021, she carried the pride of India with grace, standing tall among global icons.

Yet, as the applause faded, and Harnaaz faced the harsh sting of being in the public eye — one that's especially unforgiving towards a woman not at the peak of her fitness game — the debutante actor bounced back even stronger. She first drew the eye in a Diljit Dosanjh music video for his song *Mombattiye* and now for starring opposite Tiger Shroff in the fourth instalment of his action-packed *Baaghi* series.

Her appeal is evident as she walks onto the set of our cover shoot, a tad under the weather, yet warm and welcoming. As Harnaaz snacks on some healthy cookies mid shots, *Brides Today* catches up with the Miss Universe winner on making her way into the challenging world of cinema and the learnings from her pageantry experience she carries forward with her.

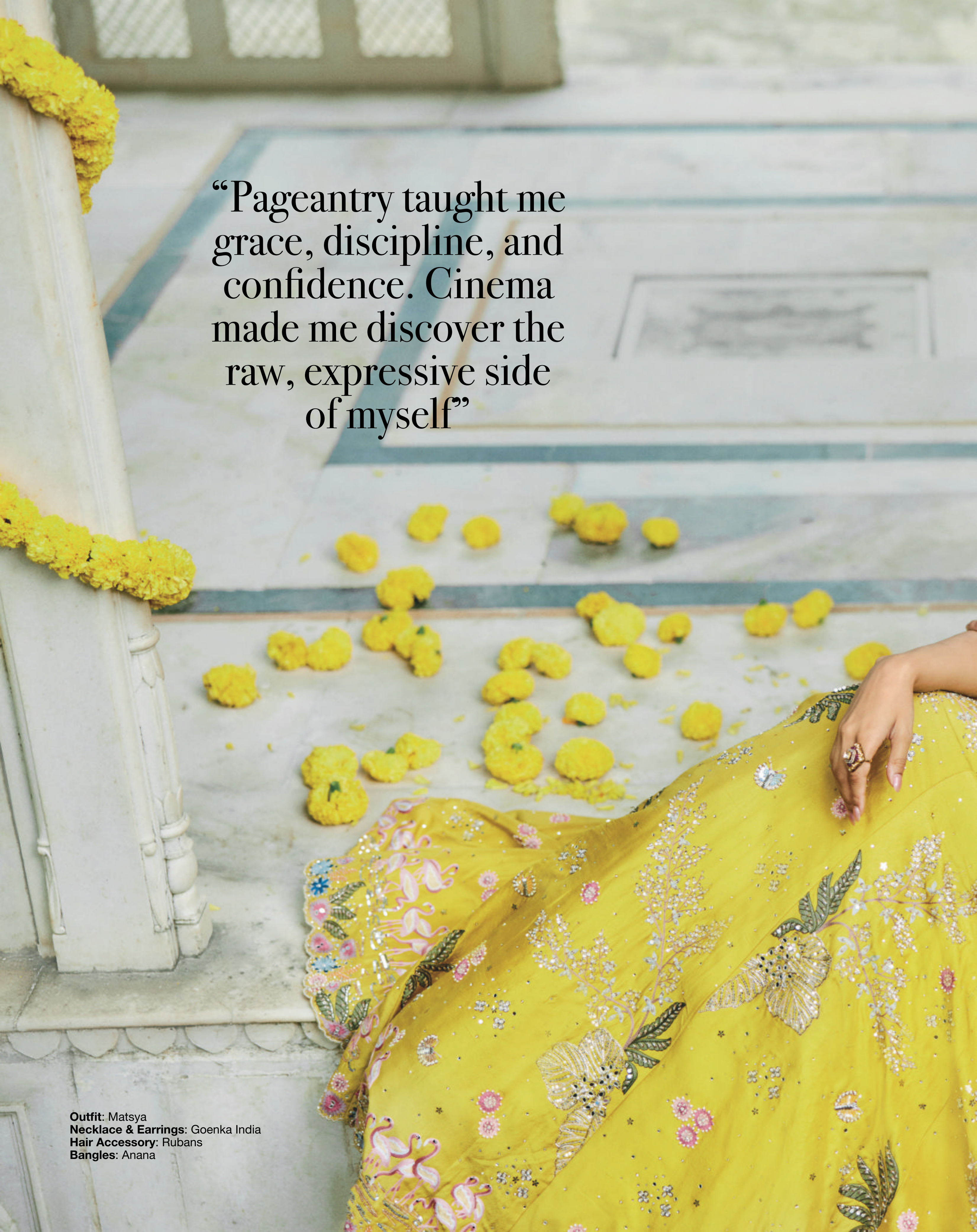
***Brides Today*: After your modelling and pageantry experience, which, of course, culminated in the Miss Universe title in 2021, how did the move to acting come about?**

Harnaaz Sandhu: Acting was always a dream at the back of my mind. The Miss Universe platform gave me global exposure and confidence, but it also taught me that I had more stories inside me to tell. That's when I knew I had to give acting a chance. I prepared by training, observing, and most importantly, learning to be vulnerable in front of the camera in a way I never had to before.

BT: You've been in the public eye for years, but now that's been amplified manifold with your Bollywood debut. Has it been overwhelming?

HS: It can feel overwhelming; I won't deny that. But I choose to see it as a blessing. I worked so hard to get here, and now that I'm here, I want to enjoy every second of it. The love, the opportunities, the challenges… I'm lapping it all up with gratitude!

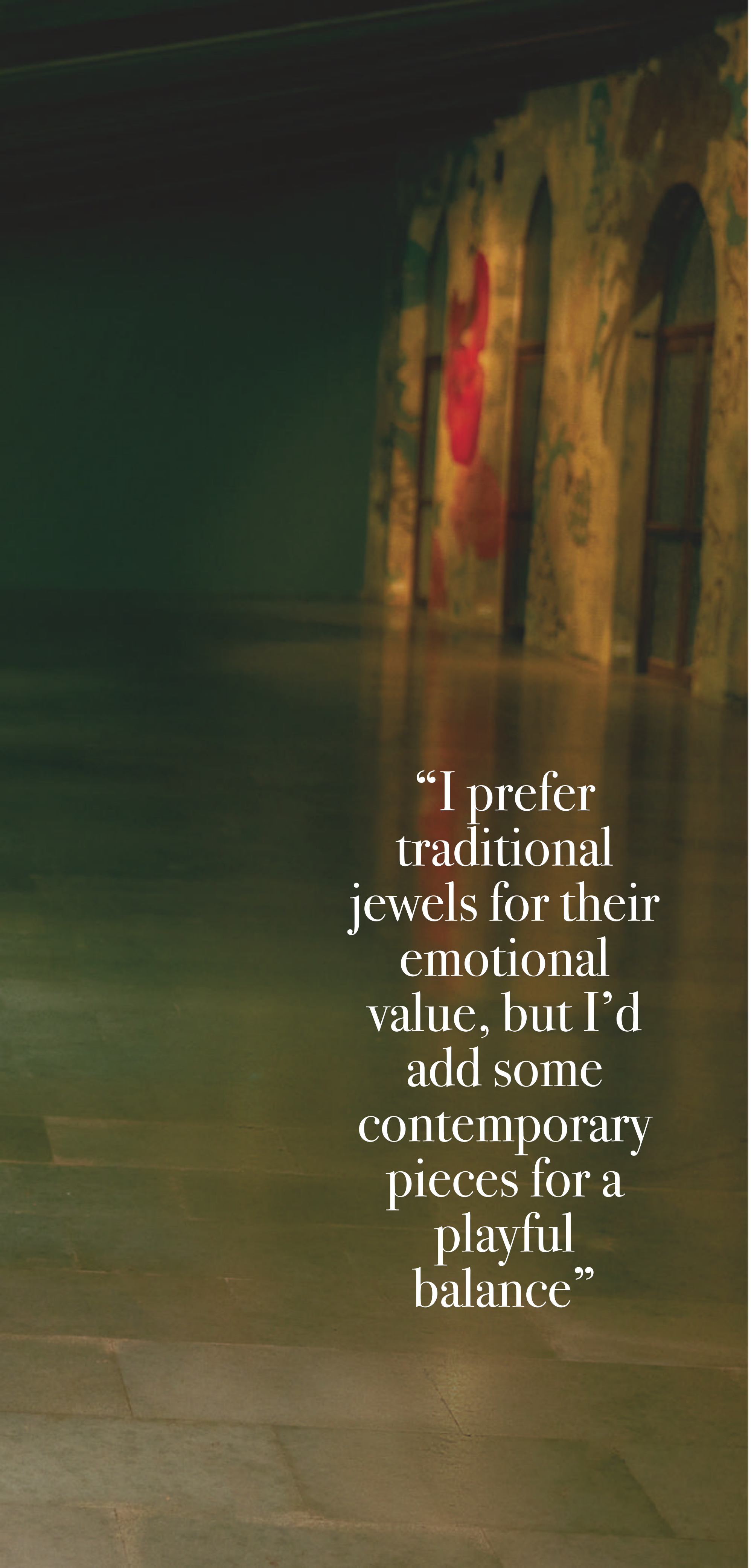
Outfit: Jayesh and Kaajal Shah
Haath Phool: 7th Avenue Jewellery
Ring: Ishhaara
Earrings & Maang Tikka: Goenka India



> “Pageantry taught me grace, discipline, and confidence. Cinema made me discover the raw, expressive side of myself”

Outfit: Matsya
Necklace & Earrings: Goenka India
Hair Accessory: Rubans
Bangles: Anana

Outfit: Surekha Jain
Jewellery: Jagdish Jewellers



> “I prefer traditional jewels for their emotional value, but I’d add some contemporary pieces for a playful balance”

IF HARNAAZ WERE A BRIDE...

Laid-back, or hands-on?
A mix! I’d love to enjoy the process, but also add personal touches.

An intimate home wedding, or destination wedding?
An intimate destination wedding — the best of both worlds.

Red, or pastels?
I’d do one of each! A classic red for tradition, and a pastel for a modern vibe.

***Lehengas*, or saris?**
Lehengas for the big day. Saris for the celebrations around it.

Which designer would you choose for bridalwear?
I’d love to experiment... Perhaps Sabyasachi for the ceremony and Manish Malhotra for the party.

Heels for style, or sneakers to dance the night away?
Sneakers hidden under a *lehenga*. Comfort is key when you want to dance till morning!

Traditional heavy jewels, or contemporary bling?
Traditional jewels for their emotional value, but I’d definitely add some fun contemporary pieces for a playful balance.

BT: What motivated you to pick an action genre rather than starting with a more 'traditional' debut? What was particularly challenging while shooting? We know how intense Tiger's training can be…
HS: I wanted to surprise myself. Action requires stamina, discipline, and a lot of courage. Training was intense! The physical preparation, the fight sequences, and even getting the small details right. But honestly, the challenge is what made it so fulfilling. Starting with action has made me stronger, both mentally and physically.

BT: What skills from your modelling days do you find most useful today? Poise, camera awareness, and public speaking perhaps?
HS: Poise for sure, and the comfort of being in front of the camera. Also, being Miss Universe taught me how to think on my feet, which is surprisingly useful when you're on set and things don't go as planned.

BT: On the flip side, is there anything you learnt earlier that you've had to unlearn or adjust to succeed in the movie world?
HS: Every stage of life prepares you for the next one. My pageant journey taught me grace, discipline, and how to carry myself with confidence. Cinema, on the other hand, has encouraged me to discover a different side of myself — one that is raw, expressive, and deeply connected to emotions. It's not about unlearning, but about adding new layers to who I am as an artist and as a person.

BT: And if you had to point out the biggest differences between the two worlds? In terms of discipline, mindset, work environment…
HS: Pageantry and cinema may be different, but both demand immense dedication. Pageantry is a long, rigorous journey of preparation and legacy, while cinema is about patience and living through a character day after day. One celebrates presenting your truest self with grace, the other celebrates immersing into a story.

> "I worked so hard to get here. I want to enjoy every second of it. The opportunities, the love, the challenges…"

BT: How important is it for you to use your platform for social, healthcare or environmental causes alongside your work in films?
HS: It's extremely important! I've always believed that my platform isn't just about me — it's about the voices I can amplify. Women's health, self-confidence, and empowerment are causes close to my heart, and I want to keep using my visibility to spark change alongside entertaining through films.

BT: Where do you see yourself five years from now? What kinds of characters are you most keen to explore? Are you interested in diversifying — perhaps OTT series, and maybe even working behind the scenes?
HS: Five years from now, I see myself experimenting with genres and all mediums. Why not all? I want to do roles that challenge me, maybe even something offbeat or completely unexpected.

BT: Tell us about your inner circle. Who's been your biggest supporter or critic? Or someone whose views helped shape your career decisions?
HS: My family has always been my anchor. My mom is my biggest supporter but also my honest critic. Friends keep me grounded; they remind me of who I am beyond the spotlight. Their love and honesty help me make every significant decision with clarity.

BT: You've gone through an incredible transformation. How much of it was about self-wellness versus external expectations one one's appearance?
HS: Transformation, for me, was never about just external expectations. It started with self-love and wellness, moving more, and taking care of my mental health. Yes, the industry has its pressures, but I chose to focus on feeling strong and confident from within. The appearance followed naturally.

BT: How was your experience shooting for us? What were your favourite moments, especially with the bridal outfits and styles?
HS: Honestly, it felt like stepping into a dream. Each outfit carried such a different mood — one made me feel regal, another playful, another romantic. My favourite part was how every look told a story, and I got to live them all in just one day. ■

Location Courtesy:
Great Eastern Home
Makeup: Lekha Gupta
Hair: Rohit Bhatkar
Editorial Coordinator:
Shalini Kanojia

ASHDEEN Z. LILAOWALA

A CUSTODIAN OF CRAFT

While the designer is revered for meticulous Parsi gara embroidery, his work today transcends that legacy. Embracing craft revival and sustainability, he redefines bridalwear with a touch of restraint, a subtle rebellion against spectacle and excess.

By DUHIN GANJU

“When a weaver’s hands touch the loom, they carry centuries of tradition and knowledge. To honour that is the highest form of luxury”

On a torrential monsoon afternoon in Mumbai, the city was caught in the kind of rain that turns highways into rivers. It was under this veil of relentless downpour that Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala joined a Zoom call from the backseat of a moving car. Outside, the chaos of the metropolis was slowed by the steady rhythm of water sliding down windscreens and the cautious crawl of traffic.

“I’m weaving through the city,” Ashdeen’s calm voice came through the screen, “and the rain forces you to slow down, to be patient. It’s a reminder that not everything in life — and certainly not in fashion — needs to be rushed.”

It is this unhurried pace that has become the hallmark of Ashdeen’s approach to bridalwear. In a world where Indian weddings, more often than not, are spectacles of grandeur and exercises in excess, his designs feel like a quiet act of resistance. They murmur rather than proclaim; they invite instead of overwhelm.

Bridal fashion in India is a universe of vibrant colours, ornate embellishments, and ritualistic splendour. Yet, Ashdeen navigates this landscape with restraint, offering an alternative vision that elevates craftsmanship and nuance above noise. His work is a meditation on the imperfect, the handmade, and the emotionally resonant.

“I believe the bride’s dress should be a vessel for her own story,” says Ashdeen. “It’s not about the designer’s ego or the brand name. The garment should be a quiet companion — something she feels connected to, not overwhelmed by.”

This philosophy surfaces in his collections through a palette of muted tones — soft creams, delicate blushes, gentle ivories, and pale golds — where colour is a suggestion, not a spectacle. The fabrics are carefully sourced, often from small-scale weavers who preserve dying arts. Like *Kanjeevaram* silk, vegetable-dyed muslin from Rajasthan, and hand-embroidered *chikankari* work from Lucknow, all chosen for their textures, their histories, and the lives they represent.

CHAMPIONING SLOW FASHION

Ashdeen's commitment to heritage goes beyond aesthetics. For him, every garment carries the weight of generations.

"We are custodians of craft, of memory," he says. "When a weaver's hands touch the loom, they carry centuries of tradition and knowledge. To respect that, to honour that, is the highest form of luxury."

This sense of responsibility extends to the artisans themselves, many of whom work in remote villages, dedicating their lives to perfecting techniques passed down generations. Ashdeen's brand prioritises ethical partnerships, fair wages, and sustainable production methods. In an industry often criticised for exploitation, this is a radical act.

"Luxury without ethics is empty," he says simply. "We must ensure that dignity is woven into every thread."

This ethos of respect and reverence translates into garments that are deceptively simple, yet painstakingly crafted. Take, for instance, the *gota patti* appliqué, a traditional craft from Rajasthan involving intricate gold ribbon embroidery. Where many designers crowd the surface with dense embellishment, Ashdeen leaves generous negative space around each motif, allowing the work to breathe and be appreciated.

"The spaces between matter," the designer explains. "They create rhythm and balance, letting the craft speak for itself."

> "Luxury without ethics is empty. We must ensure that dignity is woven into every thread"

“Bridalwear should be a quiet companion – not a costume the bride hides behind”

Similarly, his use of handwoven silks is never just about luxury but about narrative. The textures tell stories of looms worked at dawn, of generations of artisans who have devoted their lives to the fabric’s creation. In Ashdeen’s hands, a bridal *lehenga* becomes less a costume and more a living heirloom — an object of quiet power.

FOR THE BRIDES OF TODAY

His vision of bridalwear is also profoundly modern. While deeply rooted in Indian tradition, his designs resonate with a global sensibility. Brides today are savvy consumers, not only of fashion but of stories and meaning. They seek authenticity without artifice and elegance without excess.

“The contemporary bride is not looking for a costume,” Ashdeen observes. “She wants something that reflects who she is, her values, her history, her aspirations.”

This understanding of identity shapes his collections, which walk the line between the timeless and the timely. Floral motifs inspired by indigenous Indian plants bloom across silks in delicate gold bullion — a nod to nature’s cycles of renewal and growth. There is surreal needlework meant to mimic, perhaps, the Garden of Eden that truncates up the hemlines, only to swirl around the bodice like mist. Diaphanous *lehengas* in ink-dipped blues and aubergines have the ease of a T-shirt; they are cut to create that effect, to give the gift of gesture without effort. Seams in his saris, shrouded in a veil of chiffon like a shadow, disappear into embroideries — a mind-boggling technique that lets the imagination soaring up and away.

His global reach is growing, in part because his brand’s ethos strikes a chord far beyond Indian borders. Brides around the world who want bridalwear steeped in culture, yet aligned with contemporary values, are discovering Ashdeen’s work.

“Global doesn’t mean losing local,” he says. “It means giving local stories a global voice — and respect.”

What he says is a vital message at a time when the fashion industry reckons with sustainability, ethics, and cultural appropriation. Ashdeen’s commitment to transparency and care positions his brand at the forefront of a slow fashion movement, one where beauty and responsibility coexist.

On the Mumbai highway, as the rain eases and the city slowly shimmers under a break in the clouds, Ashdeen’s words linger: “There’s a different way of doing things in fashion — one that is patient, respectful, and thoughtful. One that honours craft not just as ornament, but as a way of life.”

His bridalwear embodies this philosophy: garments that are humble but rich, simple but profound. They honour history without being trapped by it, and they invite the bride to participate in a conversation between past and present, tradition and innovation.

In an industry often obsessed with volume and spectacle, Ashdeen’s expertise in quiet craft is a welcome counterpoint — it is a reminder that sometimes less is, really, more.

As India’s bridalwear hemisphere continues to evolve, designers like Ashdeen are quietly reshaping the narrative. In his understated yet powerful collections, bridalwear transcends fashion. It becomes a medium for memory, identity, and art — a tribute to the hands that weave, the stories that endure, and the women (and men) who carry these stories forward. ■

ARPITA MEHTA

MIRRORED DREAMS

She's known for creating magic with mirror work, and panache with pastels. As she expands to pinks and oranges from her signature creams, Arpita Mehta shares her insights on the evolving bridalwear market and what it means to design for a woman's most special day.

By SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY

Brides Today: What does bridalwear personally mean to you? As a designer, as a woman, and as someone who helps create unforgettable memories...
Arpita Mehta: Weddings are seen as one of the biggest events in a person's life. In India, we celebrate them with all our might and love. So creating a look for a bride on this special day is always emotional and special. In a way, we're helping make someone's dream come true — and that, I feel, is a huge responsibility. When someone trusts us with that, we want to give it our absolute best.

BT: Can you walk us through your latest bridal collection? What was the core inspiration behind it? And what kind of bride did you have in mind while conceptualising and designing it?
AM: Our bridal journey has always been an extension of my personal preferences. My vision of a bride is understated yet spectacular. It's not just about the outfit but the entire look — the jewellery, makeup, hair, shoes and, most importantly, how a bride feels in our clothes.

This season, you'll see not only our signature creams and golds but also baby pinks, nude pinks, rani pinks, and orange in our bridal *lehengas*, all adorned with our signature mirror embroidery enhanced with threadwork and *barik cutdana*, detailed with 3D mirror tassels and organza flower tassels. There are classic and playful options that keep the different kinds of brides in mind.

BT: Mirror work and pastels have become synonymous with the Arpita Mehta label. What

> "Growing up, I remember being dressed in Gujarati mirror-work *lehengas* for Navratri. That aesthetic stayed with me"

keeps you coming back to these elements? And how do you reinvent these season after season?
AM: Mirror work holds a very nostalgic and personal value for me. It goes back to my childhood. Growing up in Mumbai, I remember being dressed in Gujarati mirror-work *lehengas* for Navratri, especially the ones my mother would get from Jamnagar. That aesthetic stayed with me. So when I launched my label, I naturally gravitated towards mirror work, but I wanted to give it a contemporary identity. I experimented by combining it with modern cuts, silhouettes, and details like cutwork, and that evolved into the brand's signature look.

As for the colour palette, it's a personal preference. While I love bold colours, I usually prefer those with minimal embroidery. Pastels, on the other hand, allow for the kind of intricate, detailed embroidery I love to create. To keep it feeling fresh and not repetitive, we introduce a new twist every season — whether it's pairing it with elements like *cutdana*, cowrie shells, pearls, or updating the silhouettes and embroidery layouts.

BT: How has the Indian bridalwear industry evolved in the past decade? What do modern brides ask for today that they didn't a few years ago?
AM: Earlier, brides would be unsure and need to be shown 10 options. We'd have to create several samples before arriving at a final decision. Most brides today know exactly what they want — they come in with clarity on colour, cut, and embroidery, and are far more confident. They walk into the store, try on what they've envisioned, and that's it. Also, the opulence of bridal *lehengas* has risen significantly. With more grand weddings happening now than ever before, their demand has naturally increased.

BT: Are we seeing a permanent shift toward more minimal, non-traditional bridalwear? Or is there still a market for the kilos-heavy *lehengas*?
AM: In India, there are weddings almost every day. The idea of a defined wedding "season" doesn't exist anymore. Our bridal industry is booming, and in a country with a population of over a billion, we have all kinds of brides — from the minimal to the maximal, from the understated to the bold. So there's room for dressing every kind of bride.

BT: How do you approach functionality and wearability in bridal designs, especially for destination weddings?
AM: Functionality in a bridal *lehenga* is key. I truly believe the bride needs to be comfortable since she wears her outfits for hours. While *lehengas* can be heavy, they should be just heavy enough for the bride to manage. We often suggest reducing the can-can inside because the less can, the more beautiful the fall. For blouses and *dupattas*, we make sure they're secure and well-constructed. We also offer brides ideas to repurpose their outfits later — like turning the blouse into a sari blouse, or the *dupatta* into a kurta set — so they can rewear the look even after the festivities.

BT: Is there any one bridal look that holds a special place in your heart?
AM: My own bridal *lehenga* will always be my favourite. And the *lehenga* my sister wore to my wedding. They will always be closest to my heart.

BT: The styling advice you share with your brides.
AM: We always suggest a complete look — from hair and makeup to jewellery and *dupatta* draping — based on the *lehenga* they select and their choice of wedding destination.

BT: Scores of celebrities have worn your designs. Was there a moment, in all these years, that felt particularly iconic or validating?
AM: The launch of our coffee-table book, *The Mirror*, in 2021 was emotional for me. I had always wanted to put together something that visually, emotionally captured the essence of the brand, but I waited until the 10-year milestone to ensure it felt meaningful and complete. What made it even more special was the support of 10 inspiring women who had been part of my journey over the years. Each of them was shot in specially created pieces that reflect their personalities and our bond. They were Malaika Arora, Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, Sonakshi Sinha, Ananya Panday, Kiara Advani, Samantha Ruth Prabhu, Madhuri Dixit, Tara Sutaria, Vaani Kapoor, and Athiya Shetty. Their presence in our pages was not just validating but deeply touching.

> "My own bridal *lehenga* and the one my sister wore to my wedding will always be closest to my heart"

BT: What is your global audience like? Has the overseas demand for Indian bridalwear changed your design or marketing approach?
AM: Our global audience, especially in the US and Dubai, loves our designs. They are Indian at heart and love staying connected to our culture. We've never been asked to alter anything drastically. In fact, they prefer designs that are deeply rooted in Indian tradition.

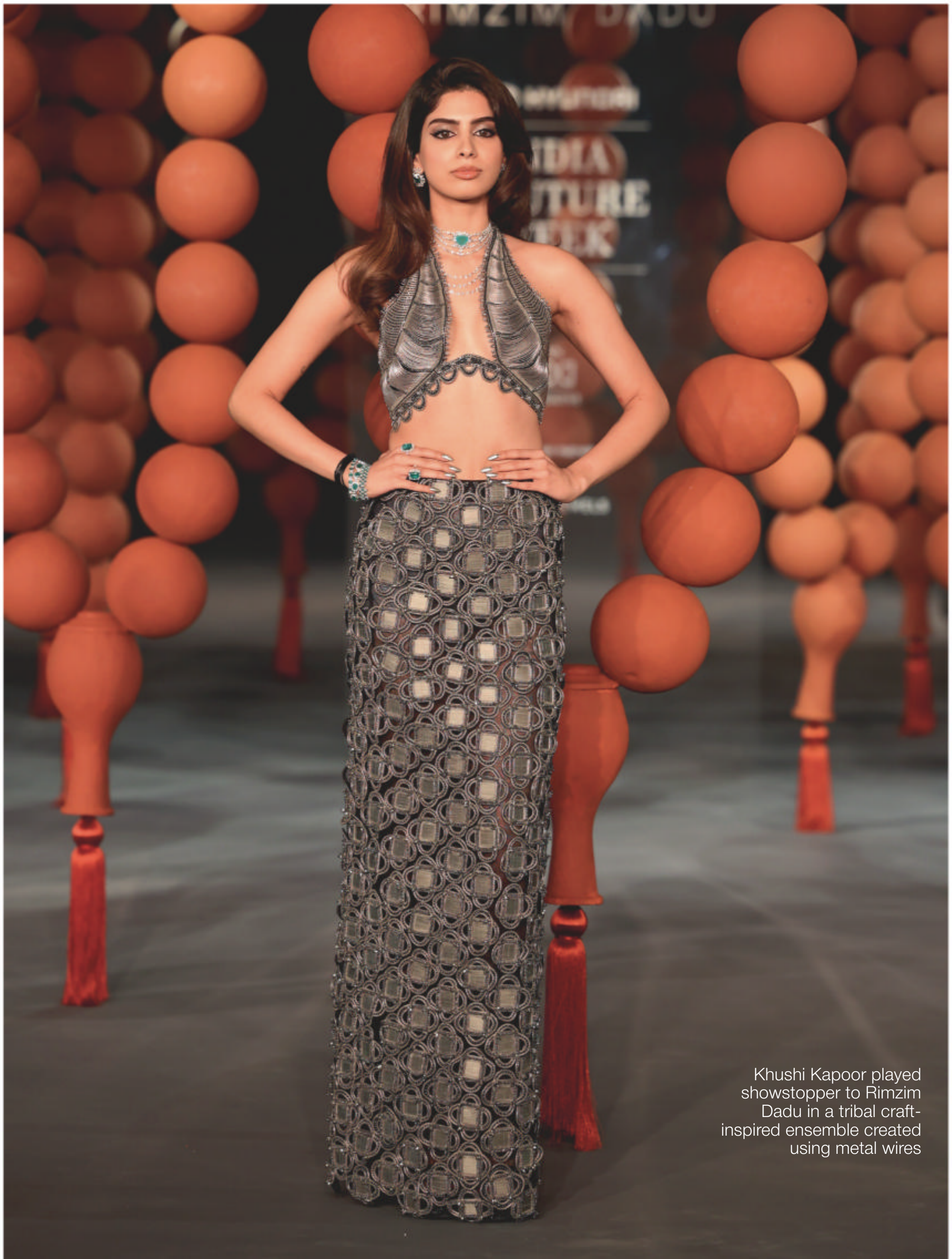
BT: What's next for brand Arpita Mehta — new categories, global expansion, and perhaps menswear?
AM: I need to feel a genuine reason to do something. It can't just be about business or monetary gains. We are opening our flagship store in Kolkata soon. As for expanding into other categories… You'll know soon! ■

“Most brides today come in with clarity on colour, cut, and embroidery, and are far more confident”

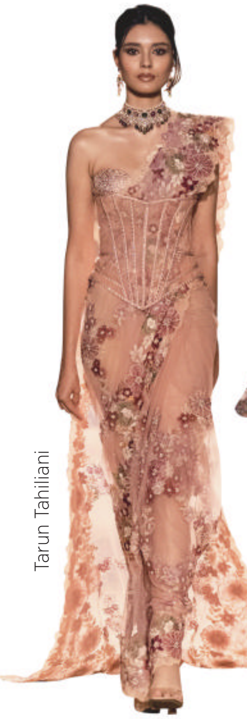
HAUTE OFF THE RUNWAY

Fourteen shows, sartorial grandeur, experimentation and avant-garde designs — all of this and more describe India Couture Week 2025 and the collections presented by the country's finest couturiers. **Brides Today** *decodes the trends that emerged.*

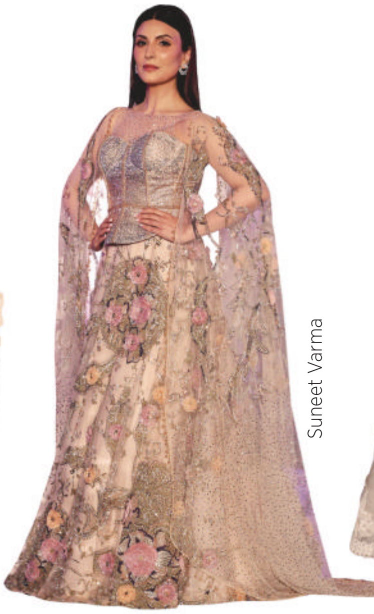
By HUNAR BHATIA



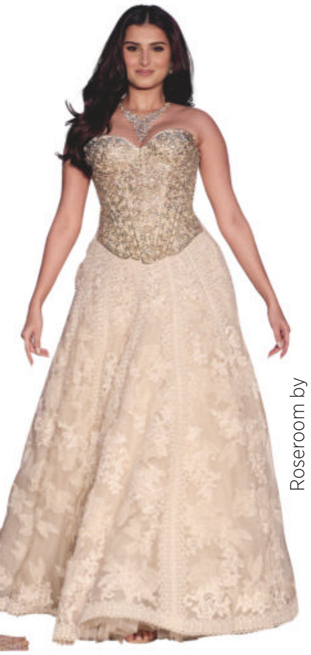
Khushi Kapoor played showstopper to Rimzim Dadu in a tribal craft-inspired ensemble created using metal wires



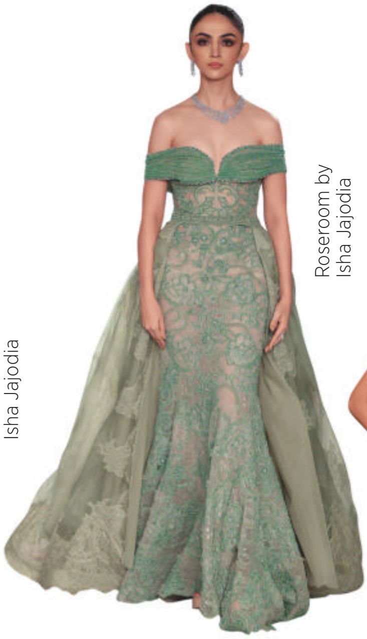
Tarun Tahiliani



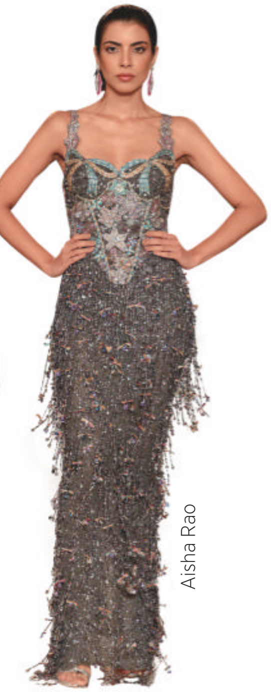
Suneet Varma



Roseroom by Isha Jajodia



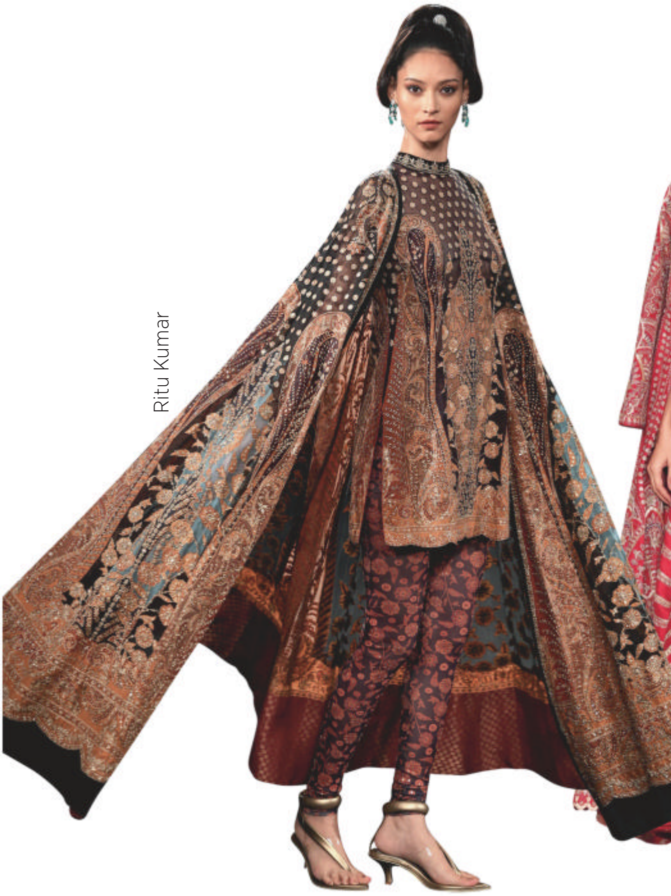
Roseroom by Isha Jajodia



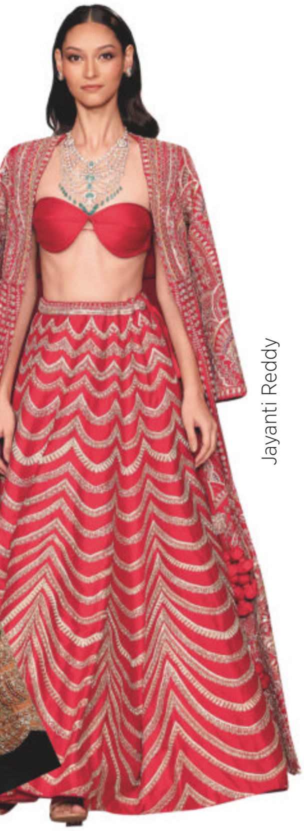
Aisha Rao

STRUCTURED DRAMA

Corsets have firmly anchored themselves into every young bride's wardrobe. "They work beautifully for *sangeets* and receptions, paired with voluminous *lehengas* or saris for a cocktail night," says designer Aisha Rao. "Corsets add structure and drama, and create a more contemporary silhouette." Besides Aisha, Tarun Tahiliani and Isha Jajodia were among the many who explored corsets through intricate embroidery, whimsical motifs, molten metallics, and jewel tones. A standout design among them was the hand-sculpted, 18-karat gold-plated corset by Roseroom by Isha Jajodia, crafted over four months and inspired by French architecture. The showstopping look made a defining case for the silhouette.



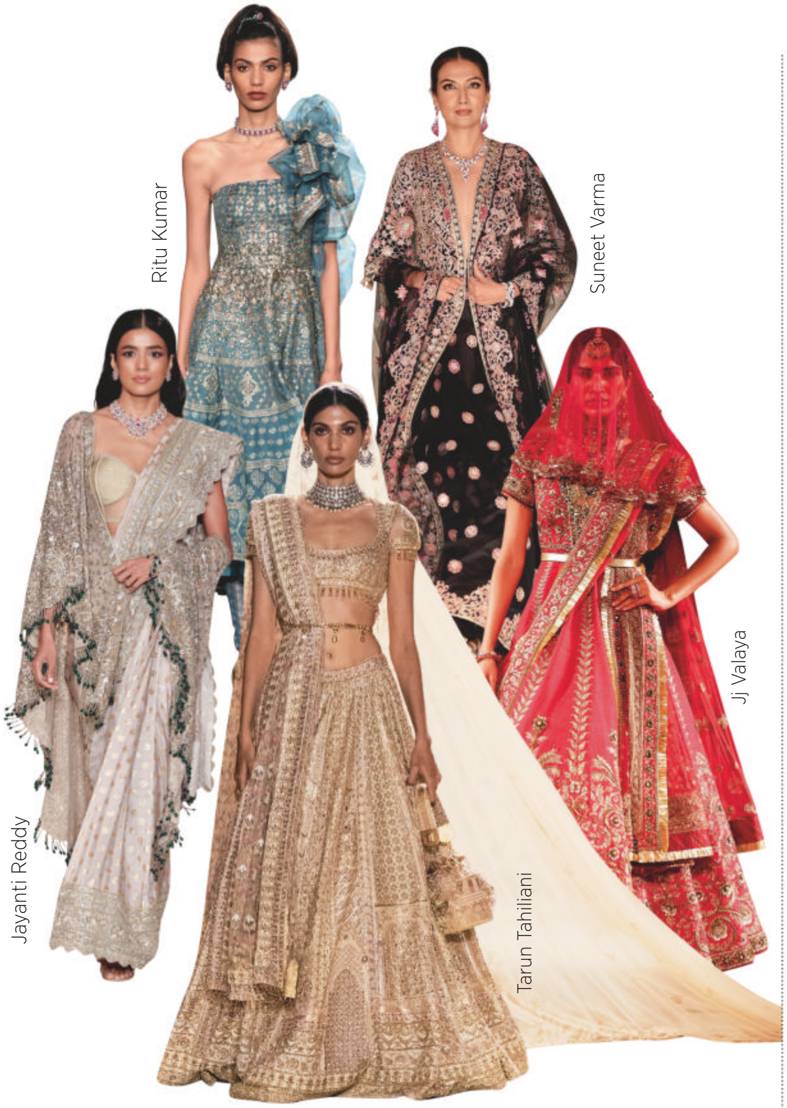
Ritu Kumar



Jayanti Reddy

COUTURE CAPES

A coming-of-age alternative for the *dupatta,* as well as a reinterpretation of shawls, capelets have begun to enjoy a spot centre stage, delicately framing intricate embroidery. Seen in collections from Rahul Mishra, Rohit Bal, and Jayanti Reddy, they infuse the power and form of architectural structure with the nostalgic romance of fluidity, creating a silhouette that brides favour today. "A capelet adds instant drama, versatility, and elegance to the trousseau, shifting the look from traditional to contemporary with ease," says Fraze Tasnim, Creative Director and CEO at Rohit Bal.

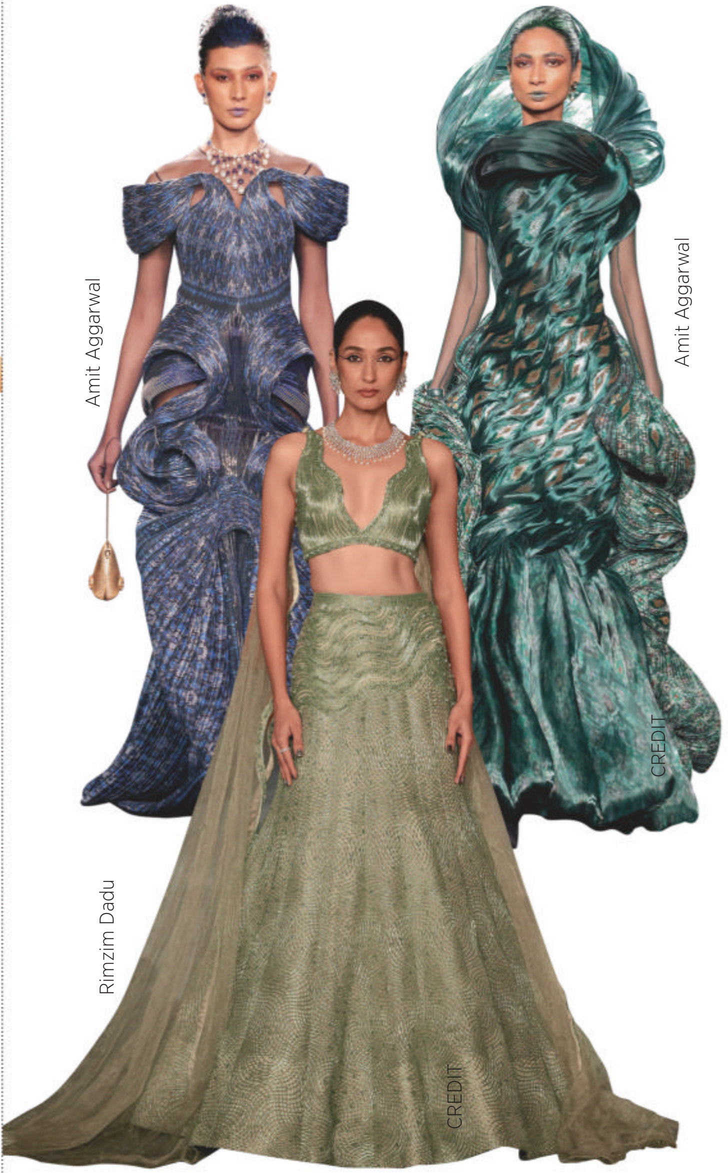


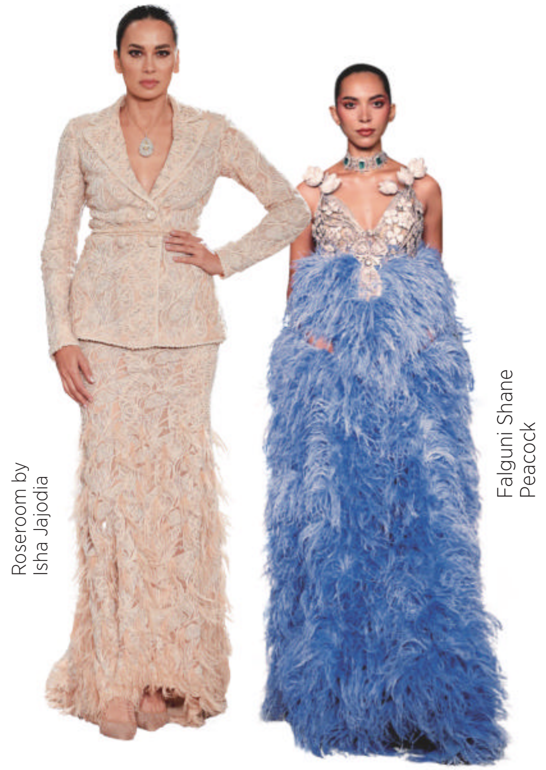
REINTERPRETED DUPATTAS

Anchored in heritage, the *dupatta* plays multiple roles: a symbol of grace, a canvas for expression, and an ever-evolving fashion statement finding different iterations over time. Whether adorned with appliquéd wild flora, metallic threadwork, or botanical-inspired textures, the *dupatta* transcends the status of a mere accessory. “For a *sangeet* or reception, a modern choice is to pleat it neatly and pin it over one shoulder. For the ceremony itself, the classic drape over the head, framed by soft pleats at the front is a timeless act of tradition. They can also be layered or draped asymmetrically across the torso, cinched at the waist with a belt, or styled as a flowing cape over the shoulders,” shares Ritu Kumar. JJ Valaya’s 33rd anniversary show made *dupattas* a spectacle in themselves. Flowing over *lehengas* and safari dresses, draped atop *sherwanis* and sheer blouses, they shimmered with embroidery, tassels, and *zari*, catching every light and movement.

METALLIC MUSINGS

With the modern bride embracing playfulness and personality, metallic embellishments have found their way into bridal fashion, lending ensembles a unique yet distinct sense of beauty. Strong, imperfect, and timeless, metals age with grace. “When I add metallic elements to my designs, I imagine them as part of the garment’s structure, almost like jewellery built into the outfit,” explains Rimzim Dadu. Designers Rahul Mishra and Amit Aggarwal, on the other hand, hand wove *Banarasi* brocades and deft-cutting *ikats* with metallic yarns to create garments that upended the very laws of physics and let the imagination soar up, up, and away.





Roseroom by Isha Jajodia

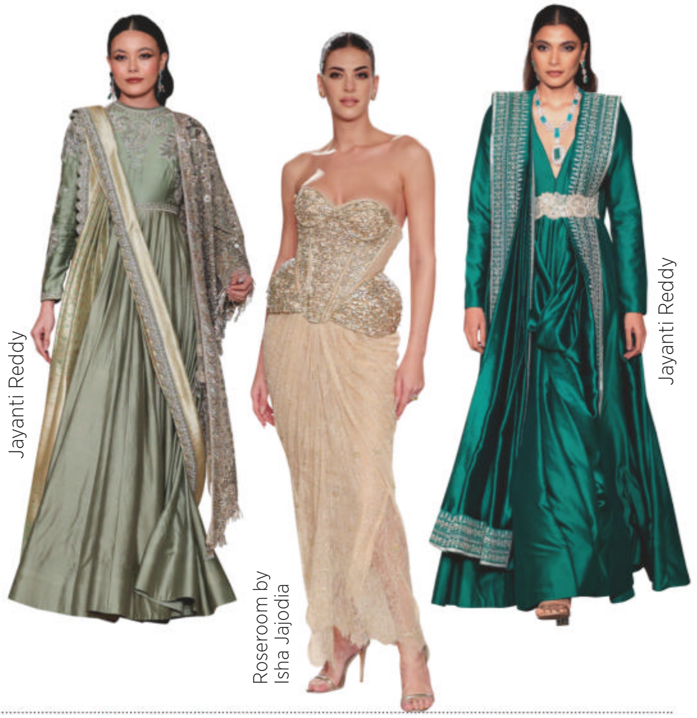
Falguni Shane Peacock

FEATHER DETAILING

Adding lightness and a sense of cinematic motion, feathers add a delicate touch to bridalwear. While Suneet Varma created an exotic forest of feathers, Falguni Shane Peacock and Roseroom by Isha Jajodia used them as trailing accents. Mostly in restrained palettes, their poetic and polished presence was subtle yet unmistakable.

PLEATED PERFECTION

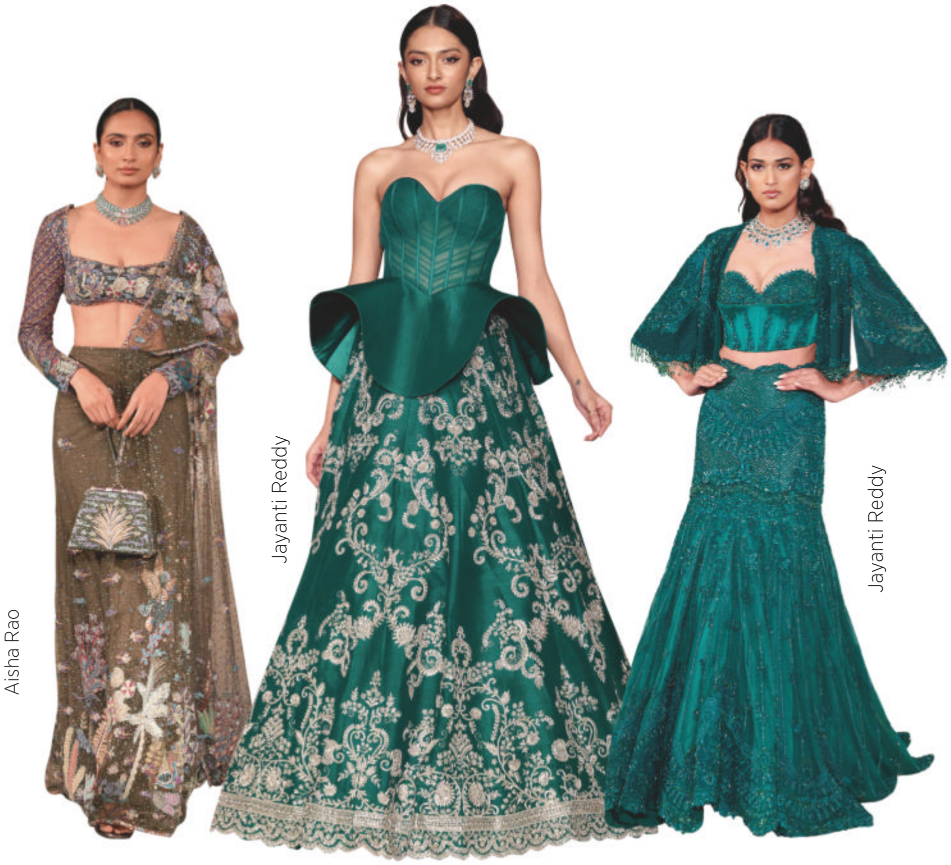
Tarun Tahiliani's pleated designs were a study in precision and drama. Brocade blouses folded into razor-sharp silks, cigarette-slim trousers were sliced through with geometric exactness, and *zardozi*-lined jackets all played with volume and fall. Each step turned fabric into sculpture, making movement a choreography of light, shadow, and architectural elegance on the runway.



Jayanti Reddy

Roseroom by Isha Jajodia

Jayanti Reddy



Aisha Rao

Jayanti Reddy

Jayanti Reddy

EMERALD ENSEMBLES

Emerald or forest green — a shade that beautifully complements the Indian skin tone and gold jewellery — shone on the runway. The hue "reflects our philosophy of reclaiming opulence — where heritage shades are not left behind but reinterpreted, offering brides a regal alternative that feels both bold and eternal," says Jayanti Reddy. This deep green exudes confidence and serenity on brides. Sunnet Varma's enchanted garden was also rife with the dramatic hue, seen on sensual silhouettes and rich fabrics. ■

VEILED BEAUTY

Lending a contemporary twist to bridal traditions.

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Matsya

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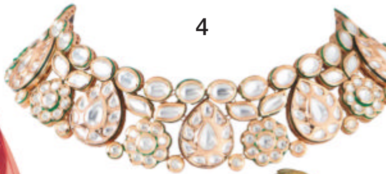

Azeera

Jigar & Nikita

5

6

Torani

7

8

Mrunalini Rao

House of Masaba

1. Candere by Kalyan Jewellers Anthara Diamond Bangle, ₹90,000 approx; **2. Swarovski** Hyperbola Pendant With Mixed Cuts and White, Mixed Metal Finish, ₹11,900; **3. Valentino Garavani** VLogo Signature Slingback Pumps, ₹1,17,656 approx; **4. Zevar by Geeta** Gold-Plated Kundan and Pearl Necklace, ₹13,390 approx; **5. Aquazurra** Gold Purist Mini Pouch, ₹83,191 approx; **6. Mughal Jewels** Silver Floral Bracelet, price on request; **7. Loeffler Randall** Rayne Sparkle Bow Clutch Bag, ₹34,331 approx; **8. Reformation** Petra Leather Sandals, ₹42,125 approx

BEAUTY

VOWS & VANITY

A curated edit of fragrances, beauty launches and luminous looks to mark the beginning of a new journey.

roberto cavalli
paradiso rosa

Roberto Cavalli, Paradiso Rosa, ₹4,650

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Exquisite fragrances that will leave you bathed in the bewitching scents of blooms and botanicals.

Illustrations by TANYA CHATURVEDI *Compiled by* ANUSHREE SARDESAI

Yves Saint Laurent, L’Eay De Toilette Nue, ₹9,300

DOLCE & GABBANA
light blue
CAPRI IN LOVE

Dolce and Gabbana, Light Blue Capri in Love, ₹11,400

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paris 5e
34 boulevard saint germain
L'EAU des HESPERIDES

Diptyque, Eau Des Hespérides Toilette Nue, price on request

DAISY WILD
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THE BEAUTY TOOLKIT

From gua sha to ice globes, we bring you the best-selling tools for your face — both modern and rooted in culture — that can leave brides with a dewy, glowing complexion for their special day.

By AAKANKSHA JAIN

GUA SHA

Invented in China to ease inflammation, gua sha represents their knowledge of the human body. This soft-edged, handy tool — in jade or ceramic — helps boost blood circulation, release muscle tension and, most importantly, aid lymphatic drainage. In modern use, gua sha massages in a scraping motion have gained popularity to bring about definition to one's face, and can also be used to reduce acne and facial fat. Deramatologist Dr. Jaishree Sharad says, "Real crystal gua sha feels naturally cool to touch, is lightweight, and shows natural variations, fine lines, marbling, or mineral inclusions. Under light, it displays depth and subtle imperfections, unlike glass or plastic, which feel warmer and lighter, and look uniformly smooth."

HOUSE OF BEAUTY
HOUSE OF BEAUTY

ICE GLOBES

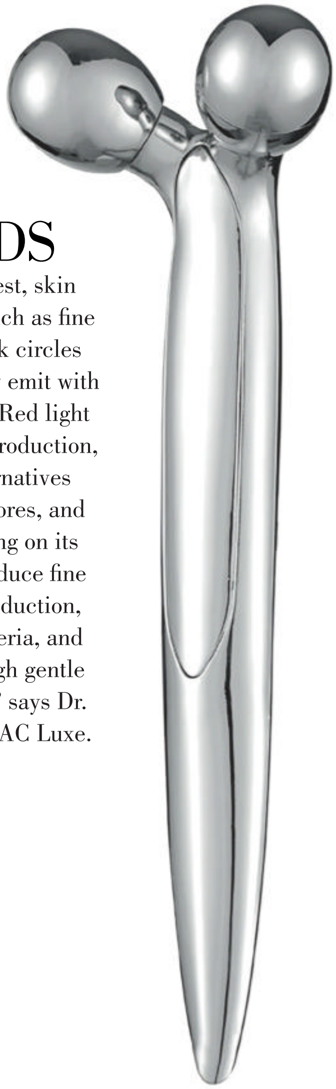
Ice globes offer the same effects as plunging your face into a bowl of ice water to reduce puffiness. Typically made of glass or stainless steel with liquid inside, it's the portable, easier and a preferable solution. They help reduce skin irritation and puffiness, minimise the appearance of pores, and also aid lymphatic drainage. For use, store them in the freezer overnight to apply the globes over your face in the mornings. Vibhuti Arora, Founder of House of Beauty says, "After a session of muscle stimulation and *pranayama*, using chilled ice globes to cool down can help calm inflammation, tighten the skin, and activate the parasympathetic nervous system."

JADE ROLLERS

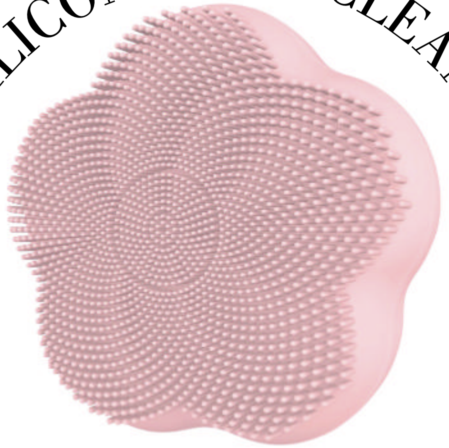
During the Qing regime in China, women used jade rollers to maintain youthful features. While similar in use and materials to the gua sha, jade rollers differ in technique, offering a much more relaxing experience to target puffiness under the eyes, chin and neck, etc. They are also often used to stimulate the skin to absorb serums, creams or moisturisers.

SKIN WANDS

More tech-infused than the rest, skin wands can address concerns such as fine lines, wrinkles, acne, and dark circles through the micro-currents they emit with the help of LED light therapy. Red light therapy wands boost collagen production, whereas their blue light alternatives are known to lower oiliness, pores, and sebum production. “Depending on its technology, skin wands can reduce fine lines by boosting collagen production, reduce acne by targeting bacteria, and fade hyperpigmentation through gentle stimulation and cell turnover,” says Dr. Gettika Mittal, Founder of ISAAC Luxe.



SILICONE SKIN CLEANSERS



Skin cleansers help with exfoliation to get rid of dead cells and stored impurities by cleaning out your pores. Made entirely of silicone with a convenient socket for grip, these can be used with liquid cleansers, face washes, cleansing foams and other such products. “These cleansers resist bacterial build-up and irritation due to their non-porous nature. They increase blood circulation and are generally suitable for all skin types. Regular use can help unclog pores and reduce mild blackheads and whiteheads by removing debris, excess oil, and dead skin,” Dr. Mikki Singh, a board-certified dermatologist and cosmetologist, and Founder and Medical Director at Bodycraft.

FACE CUPS

Made with silicone for easier suction, face cups help in lifting, contouring and enhancing blood circulation. They relieve facial tension, reduce inflammation, enhance product absorption, and promote overall skin health naturally. Vibhuti Arora of House of Beauty says, “There is truly no other treatment better than face cupping, especially if you have rosacea, psoriasis, or sensitive skin. Face cups, eye cups, and body cups become a holistic practice you must include in your routine. It’s your skin’s reset button, blending ancient wisdom with modern glow.” ■

HOUSE OF BEAUTY
HOUSE OF BEAUTY
HOUSE OF BEAUTY
HOUSE OF BEAUTY

PRETTY & PROTECTED

From sun sticks and hair mists to lip protectants, we've got you primed and shielded.

By ANKITA MALHOTRA

bareMinerals
MINERAL VEIL

Infused with mineral SPF 25, this talc-free, translucent setting powder is ideal for long days.

bareMinerals
Loose Setting Powder Broad Spectrum SPF 25, ₹3,600

EMBRYOLISSE
Stick solaire • Sun stick
SPF 50+

With antioxidant-rich roucou oil and nourishing shea butter, this sun stick keeps your skin safe, smooth and shielded.

Embryolisse
Sun Stick SPF50+, ₹1,925

la pink
VITAMIN C
SUNSCREEN
SPF 50 PA++++

Enriched with vitamins, antioxidants, and UV-ray shielding properties, this broad-spectrum sunscreen protects and also reverses signs of aging.

La Pink
Vitamin C Sunscreen SPF 50
₹695

Packed with vitamin C and pink pepper extract, this soft powder keeps your skin hydrated and energised for 24 hours.

Givenchy
Compact Cream SPF 15 PA+, ₹6,000

d'you
unkissed
SPF 70 PA++++
CAPSULE SUNSCREEN

A serum-based SPF 70+ sunscreen, it blends into the skin and leaves no white cast.

d'you
Unkissed, ₹650

Silky on the skin and strong against the sun, this SPF foundation is infused with bamboo powder and black rose oil.

Gucci Beauty
Éternité de Beauté Foundation SPF 15, ₹4,500

HYPHEN
ALL I NEED LIPSCREEN
[SPF 30]

Packed with the power of pomegranate and avocado, this SPF 30 lipscreen lightens pigmentation.

Hyphen
All I Need Lipscreen SPF 30, ₹399

ROSE SUN MIST
indē wild

A spray of this broad spectrum SPF can set your makeup and shield your skin in seconds.

indē wild
Rose Sun Mist SPF 50+, ₹849

Supergoop!
GLOW SCREEN
GOLDEN HOUR
40

This sunscreen doubles as a primer and hydrates, thanks to hyaluronic acid and vitamin B5.

Supergoop!
Glow Screen SPF 40 PA+++, ₹3,200

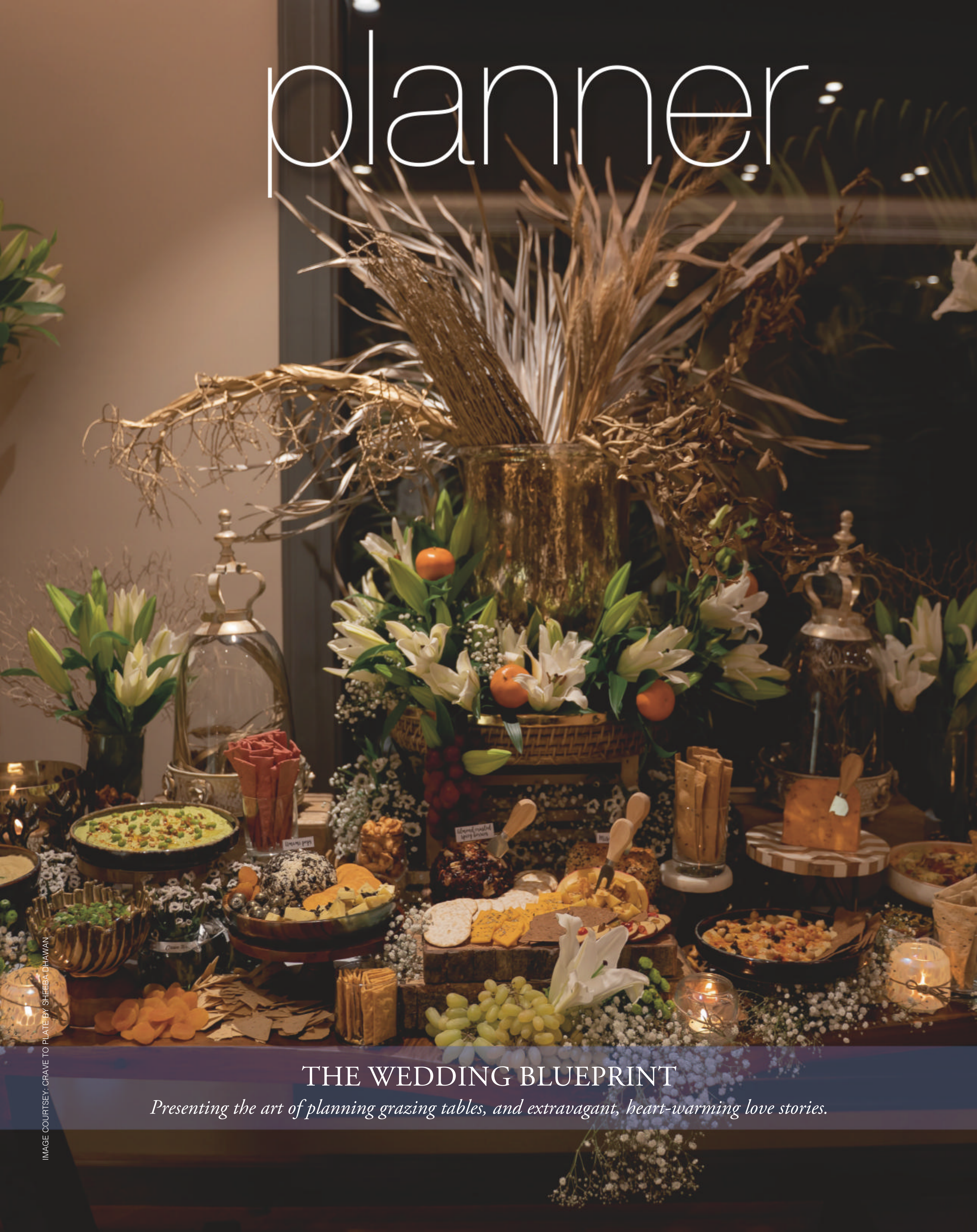
Elizabeth Arden

Try this all-weather lip protectant that delivers long-lasting hydration with SPF 15 and a tint.

Elizabeth Arden
Eight Hour Cream Lip Protectant Stick SPF 15, ₹1,900

PRODUCT IMAGES: COURTESY OF THE BRANDS

planner



THE WEDDING BLUEPRINT

Presenting the art of planning grazing tables, and extravagant, heart-warming love stories.

IMAGE COURTSEY: CRAVE TO PLATE BY SHEEBA DHAWAN

BON APPETIT
NU WORLD CONNECT
HONEY

THE GRAZING AFFAIR

Abundance meets artistry and functionality — this is the new language of wedding feasts today. Beyond the culinary delights, they've evolved to become statement spreads that tell stories of cultures and memories. **Brides Today** *unravels the art of grazing tables and how they form an intrinsic part of celebrations today.*

By HUNAR BHATIA

From décor to hospitality services, the spectrum of wedding to-dos is seemingly endless. Yet, it's often the wedding feast that lingers in memory, long after the celebration. Gone are the days of lacklustre, structured buffets. Reigning supreme, instead, are ostentatious grazing tables with creative menus, presenting food styling at its best.

A culmination of artistic presentation and inventive culinary curations — besides a whole lot of cheese — feasting tables offer epicurean delights that come together with theatrical practicality. Like a table washed entirely in orange — not through logos or gimmicks, but clementines, marigold-hued macarons, saffron-dusted crisps, and apricots piled high.

"Guests should feast with their eyes before taking a bite; the visual experience is part of the appetite," says Maitri Shah, Creative Director of Mai Stories, an event designing firm, urging us to visualise tables that come alive with the rises and falls of landscapes — like a cascade of grapes spilling over silver, a tiny forest of herbs in ceramic pots, and so on.

"A table should feel so composed, so alive, that guests almost want to sketch it before they taste it."

STAGING ANATOMY

A table well done will always be symbolic of two factors — levels and accessibility. While varying heights through platters and bowls creates a sense of flow to guide your eye, the dishes on offer should also be reachable from all sides of the table, with variety being key.

Ambika Seth, Director at Caara, anchors her spreads with a few factors in mind: only presenting items that are bite-sized and easy to handle, and in terms of styling, allowing the fare to shine by using other elements like fruits, flowers and colours to simply complement the food.

> "A well-planned grazing table is a composition of colour, height, taste, and flow, all coming together to create a visual and culinary experience that lingers long after the last bite" – Ami Kothari, tablescape artist

"Different forms of lighting can add a great deal to the table, as well," she explains.

Tablescape artist Ami Kothari, on the other hand, suggests starting with a bold foundation — jewel-toned runners or printed linens — and layering with textures like velvet, glass, brass, and hand-beaten metals.

"A dramatic candle cluster or oversized floral arrangement is always recommended as a statement piece," she adds. "Deeper hues of burgundy, forest green, indigo, and amber work well when paired with metallics or smoked glassware to keep it luxe."

Critical for grazing tables is plating the right kind of food. "Fried items can turn soggy, and creamy desserts may not hold if left out too long," warns Ami. "Opt for ingredients and preparations that are sturdy and can remain fresh over time, like hard cheeses, fresh fruits, olives, nuts, artisanal breads, and mini open-faced sandwiches."

A CULTURAL CONCOCTION

Such wedding feasts don't just assemble aesthetics and flavours — they celebrate diversity by bringing various cultures to the table — literally. Cuisines can present the couple's roots through gastronomic narratives, transforming ingredients into design elements to tell their story.

"One of my favourite set-ups was an all-Indian grazing table that featured regional specialities from across the country — mini *idlis* with chutney, sweet potato *chaat*, *kothimbir vadi, pitla* on a mini *thalipeeth*, *dahi vada, kanji vada, khandvi*, and more. It was a refreshing twist from the usual, and appealed to all age groups," shares Ami. "For a Rajasthani set-up, I weave in *leheriya* or block-printed fabrics with earthy terracotta pots. Each element becomes part of a cultural dialogue — food as both memory and identity."

FUTURE FORWARD

From elevating the mundane practice of eating into an act of luxury, to experimenting with diverse themes, grazing tables are gaining momentum in India, shaped by evolving trends and focus on aesthetics.

"We're entering an age of intentional indulgence, where less is most certainly more," says Maitri. "Picture small, carefully considered portions replacing mountains of cheese and charcuterie that often go untouched. Or rustic loaves of bread, torn by hand, paired with artisanal butters piped like vintage rosettes. Suddenly, the most elemental act of eating feels ceremonial."

"By making food thematic and individually portioned, you not only invite guests in but give them permission to savour without excess. The future lies in tables that seduce quietly, through detail and intention, rather than shouting with extravagance."

Basing tables on thematic colours is Ami's specialty, as she believes in the coherence and visual intrigue they offer. However, Mona Ahuja, a table décor specialist, finds the 'it' factor in edible décor like fruit roses, cheese sculptures, ombré macaron towers, and swirled butter boards.

BESPOKE BITES

From personalised table runners printed with the clients' favourite travel destinations, and cheeky slogans on food such as "Brie Mine," to hashtags engraved onto cutlery even printed onto food, the psychology behind customisation runs a lot deeper than expected. These elements serve as instant conversation starters, especially for discerning consumers who shell out enough to warrant an immersive, detail-driven experience.

Today, linens, lighting, and crockery serve less as functional backdrops and a lot more as curated keepsakes. Maitri finds this wave of personalisation delightfully daring.

"Imagine *mithai* pressed with a couple's monogram, or kulfi served inside carved tender coconuts that must be cracked open to reveal the flavour within," she says. "Even ice can be customised, cubes frozen with marigold petals or rosebuds, tiny verses from a love poem slowly emerging as they melt into a cocktail."

Finally, she let us in on a few secrets: "Forget the tablecloth; design with a textured rug instead, then add layer upon layer until the table feels like a stage. Perhaps with a worn antique textile, block printed or marbled table covers picked up on trips, or something totally unexpected like raw paper and glazed tiles."

"Next come the silver trays spilling over with figs, candied orange slices glistening like jewels, velvet cushions cradling trays of truffles, and little spun-sugar nests tucked among blooms. Fruits should tumble, chocolates should overflow, and textures should collide!"

Overall, the magic lies in crafting a wedding feast that's lightly surreal yet serves as a personal tableau, one that marries design, flavour, and stories. ■

"Function matters, but I always begin with feeling – what do I want guests to sense before they've even sat down" – Maitri Shah, Mai Stories

FROM PLAYDATES TO THE ALTAR

Theirs is a story of a classic childhood friendship that turned into a journey of a lifetime. Best friends and partners for life, Bhakti Khubchandani and Pratham Nandwani share how they made their way to a picture-perfect wedding.

By ANKITA MALHOTRA

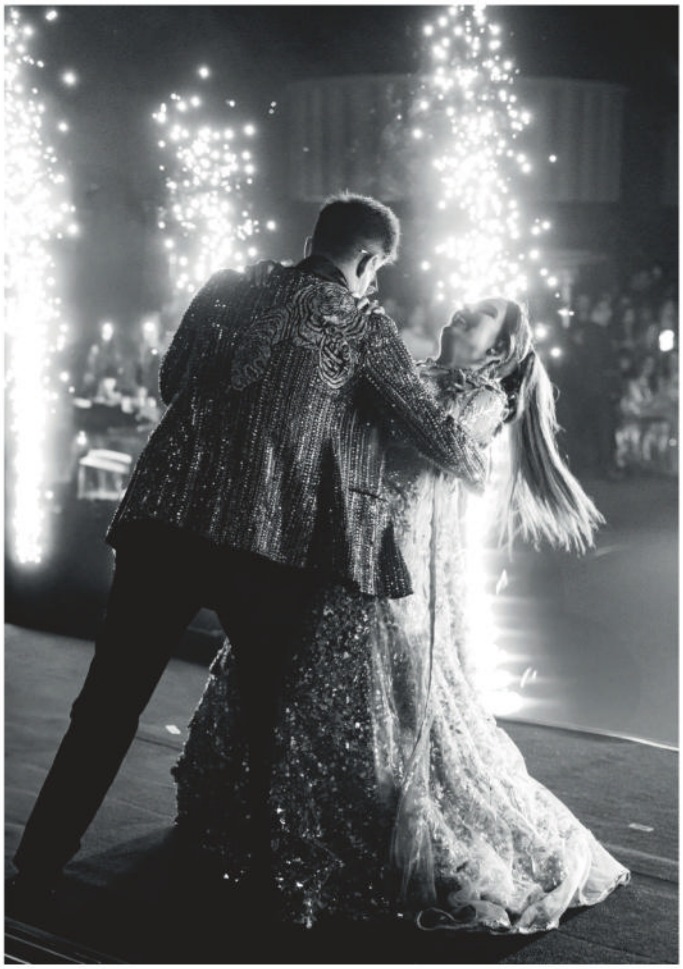
HOW WE MET

"Pratham was the boy next door who became the love of my life. It wasn't love at first sight; it was a friendship that bloomed. Sparks started to fly between us at university, and we became the best of friends. Our bond strengthened as we shared all the phases of our lives together. We took our time (maybe too much time!) to stop being *delulu* about what was right in front of us. But 16 years later, when we finally acknowledged it, it felt most natural. He's always been my safest place, and somewhere along the way, my heart quietly chose him."

THE NEXT STEP

"He had this picture-perfect proposal planned in Venice — a dreamy gondola ride, rose petals showered on us from a bridge, a painted banner with our photo and the words 'Marry Me, Bhakti?' on it… He wanted to have the whole fairy tale — but Venice got flooded, flights were grounded, and we got stuck in Istanbul.

Most people would just postpone, but not Pratham. The next day, he recreated the entire proposal on a yacht, in the middle of the Bosphorus river, complete with fireworks, a violinist on board, laser lights projecting my name across



the Bosphorus bridge for all of Europe and Asia to see, and a media team that didn't speak a word of English to capture it all!

It was all chaotic, creative, raw and real — and completely us. The second he proposed, we were laughing, crying, and calling everyone we loved. We actually kept our 'friends-to-more' relationship a secret the entire time, so these phone calls to our friends quite literally shocked them!"

LEADING UP TO THE BIG DAY

"By February, we kicked off our pre-wedding events in Dubai with a *Mata ki Choki* and *Jai Guruji* to first seek blessings, followed by a cosy family *mehendi* where all generations — literally seven to 70 — put on a surprise skit for us. We had a hilarious and heartfelt vow ceremony with youngsters, including a 12-minute roast of Pratham by his brothers, and then the civil wedding, where we brought the party to the courtroom.

This meant we only truly began planning the actual wedding in February — for April! It was the biggest adventure of our lives — bringing a dream wedding with over 600 people to life in just a few weeks. We were intentional with every detail — from designing each couture outfit first-hand with Manish Malhotra and Falguni Shane Peacock, to building every graphic and set element from scratch."

MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME

"If we had to choose a core memory, that would be the bridal entry. I walked 1km across a mirrored aisle suspended above the pool, surrounded by a fairytale setting — pastel glass blooms and iridescent reflections — as the Barbie bride I had always dreamt of being, with my long pink veil trailing behind me. My voice played through the speakers, sharing the most vulnerable words I've ever spoken. I spoke from my heart to his, and with the tears there, apparently everyone else's too!

And just when the emotions peaked, Pratham pretended to run away with the *varmala*, then accidentally put mine on upside down (sending all aunties into a panic!). We raised our hands to the sky as an explosion of colour burst behind us. It was bold, beautiful, and full of life — just like the overwhelming presence of love from everyone around us."

MY ADVICE

"Don't chase perfection, chase meaning. The most beautiful weddings aren't the most flawless; they're the most felt. Let it be raw, real, and unapologetically you. On a practical note, delegate, hydrate, and always be kind to yourself, even if that means giving in to the cravings.

If your experience is anything like mine, you'll probably drop a few kilos in the madness anyway, whether you mean to or not! And to future couples, don't just plan your wedding — experience it. Cry ugly. Laugh loud. Dance till your feet give away. Let go of control and stay open. That's when the magic happens." ■

THE DETAILS

Wedding Design: Red Velvet Events
Photographer: Sam & Ekta
Bride's Outfits: Manish Malhotra and Falguni Shane Peacock
Makeup: Pooja Khurana

A UNION OF CULTURES

When Czech native Karolina Ebel and techie Chaitanya Aluru met, it was the beautiful culmination of two distinct worlds. From a California proposal to a Prague wedding, we trace their story.

By SONAM POLADIA

HOW WE MET

“Chaitanya and I met through a dating app in New York. What started as a simple conversation on a rainy day quickly turned into something more. There was an ease to it — no big drama, just a real connection.”

THE NEXT STEP

“Chaitanya proposed two weeks before our formal engagement, on a cliffside near Carmel-by-the-Sea in California, one of my favourite spots. He had written a heartfelt note and tucked it into a bouquet of roses. That note stayed with me and eventually became the inspiration for my wedding veil, which was embroidered with the words, ‘In every bunch, there’s one who stands out, and you are that one.’”

LEADING UP TO THE BIG DAY

“We took a month-long trip across Europe and India to plan the wedding and celebrate with our families. I curated more than 10 outfits across both cultures,

exploring India's incredible craftsmanship and blending styles for each event. Planning an Indian-Czech wedding in Prague wasn't easy, but with the help of our organisers, we made it happen."

MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME

"Walking through the streets of Prague with our entire *baraat* was unforgettable. Dancing to the beats of the *dhol* in a city that had never seen anything like it... Locals stopped in awe, tourists pulled out their phones! It felt like we were part of something historic. But what made it even more special was seeing both sides of our families come together. Chaitu's family embraced Czech traditions, and mine fully participated in the Indian rituals — from dressing in traditional Indian outfits to learning about each ceremony. It was more than a wedding; it was a beautiful blend of cultures."

MY ADVICE

"Make it your own. Don't feel pressured to follow trends. Instead, focus on what reflects you as a couple. Embrace

each other's backgrounds, and let that show in your celebrations. Some of our most meaningful moments came from learning about and honouring each other's traditions. And yes, get the right team, especially for destination weddings. Having people who understood both cultures made a world of difference in bringing our vision to life." ■

THE DETAILS

Planning, Styling & Décor: RVR Eventz & Design (for the Indian wedding events)
Photography & Videography: RVR PRO
Hair & Makeup: Veronika Boho

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FOREVER STARTS HERE

From unparalleled hot air balloon rides to lakeside hideaways and the Northern Lights, discover the most enchanting destinations that set the stage for unforgettable, fairytale proposals.

By SHRADDHA CHOWDHURY

IMAGE: PEXELS

Lake Como, Italy

Not only is it one of the most sought-after, perpetually booked destinations for weddings, Lake Como is a popular choice for engagements, as well. Pick from picturesque restaurants, grand villas with magnificent lake views, or quiet, hidden alcoves framed by wisteria blooms. There are myriads of perfect backdrops to go down on one knee — classic, cinematic, and utterly romantic.

Maldives

Arrange a secluded, candlelit dinner on a pristine stretch of beach at sunset. Turn a floating breakfast moment into something special. Head out on a yacht to start your forever in the Indian Ocean. Or go all out with "Will you marry me?" written on the sand with rose petals or even underwater during a scuba diving expedition on a special waterproof sign. You just can't go wrong with a Maldivian proposal.

IMAGES: PEXELS, UNSPLASH

New York City, USA

Plan an elaborate picnic in the picturesque setting of Central Park, or a carriage ride through the greenery. Head to the Brooklyn Bridge at sunrise, or atop the Empire State Building *Gossip Girl* style. Book a sunset boat tour on the Hudson River. Try a helicopter proposal over the skyline, or pop the question amid applause at Times Square. The city that never sleeps will never run out of proposal spots either.

Prague, Czech Republic

Picture this: the sun's rising over Prague Castle and the Vltava River. It's a private, serene moment in the early hours of the day. Your partner turns around to find you down on one knee. It couldn't get more romantic than this — and Prague, a city straight out of a fairy tale, offers just this and more. Dotted with castles, bridges, and cobbled streets, the historic and romantic atmosphere offers an ideal backdrop for a memorable proposal. The Royal Gardens also make for a beautiful location, especially in spring and summer when it comes alive with colour.

Cappadocia, Turkey

It may be a cliché, but it'd certainly be worth it. Options in Cappadocia range from a secluded dinner in a cave to an iconic hot air balloon ride — touted as the best in the world, you float above the valleys at sunrise, with hundreds of other balloons filling the sky. Autophiles can try the vintage car ride through the valleys. Speaking of which… Love Valley, Rose Valley, and Red Valley, each known for their stunning scenery, make for romantic proposal spots, as well.

Zanskar Valley, Ladakh

The wild, untouched terrain of Ladakh, which boasts some of the clearest views of the Milky Way, is calling for you to plan your special moment. Head to the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve to start your forever under a bed of stars. For a daytime affair, propose by the turquoise Zanskar river, or against the stunning backdrop of the Drang-Drung Glacier or a high mountain like the Pensi La Pass. The Chadar Trek is another option for adventurous couples, though it requires extensive planning.

IMAGES: PEXELS, UNSPLASH

Iceland

From glaciers and waterfalls to volcanoes and black sand beaches, Iceland's spectacular scenery is ideal for both romantic and adventurous engagements. A proposal atop a glacier or while soaking in a geothermal hot spring, with the Northern Lights doing the dance above you, would be a moment neither party would ever forget.

IMAGES: PEXELS, UNSPLASH

Switzerland

There's nothing quite like a proposal against the breathtaking backdrop of the Swiss Alps. There's the serene Bachalpsee Lake, the iconic Matterhorn in Zermatt, the dramatic Cliff Walk of Grindelwald First, as well as the cosy alpine village of Wengen. Plan a summer proposal for landscapes awash in colour, or one in winter for a snowy winter wonderland.

Santorini, Greece

At some point in their life, every Bollywood buff must have fantasised about being wooed down the cobbled lanes of Santorini. Not only has the white-and-blue visual wonder served as the set of several romantic Hindi movie songs, its azure waters, breathtaking caldera views, catamaran cruises, and stunning sunsets make it a popular proposal hotspot. Keep it simple and intimate, or make a grand gesture with the help of a professional.

Seychelles

Africa's answer to the Maldives, Seychelles boasts options aplenty for romantic getaways — and also to plan the picture-perfect proposal. Make an elaborate gesture at any of the powdery beaches by warm, blue waters, or wander through the many lush trails across the islands. Here, you never know when you might come across a hidden waterfall. It could just create that magical setting you were seeking in the tropics. ■

Manama, Bahrain

BAHRAIN BECKONS

Blending rich heritage with world-class luxury, this island nation offers a magical backdrop for destination weddings — and the Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain makes every moment extraordinary.

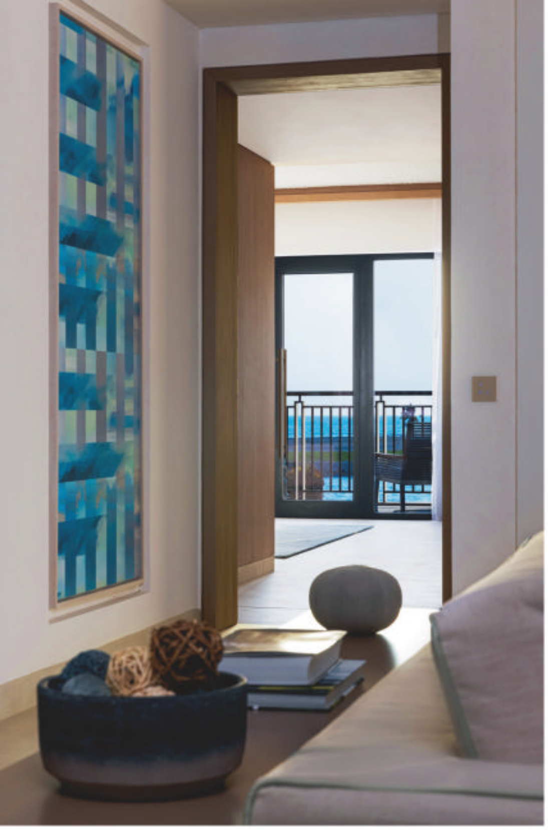
By ANKITA MALHOTRA

Ensconced in the heart of the Arabian Gulf, the Kingdom of Bahrain is a sun-kissed archipelago with an air of understated charm. Cosmopolitan and pulsating with cultured energy, it's a culmination of two worlds, where its rich past brushes shoulders with the modern present. Today, with destination weddings becoming the favoured way to tie the knot, Bahrain has become a preferred choice for overseas celebrations.

The surreal landscapes and exceptional venues here elevate the festivities to a whole new level, with art, culture and the right mix of global vibes adding to the experience. Also riding this wave is a range of exquisite hotels that make the island nation worth the while. What with their stunning interiors, exceptional culinary delights, and services that guarantee a royal experience, it's all about the good life in this country.

One such venue is the Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain. Nestled along the coastline, this haven blends traditional elegance with contemporary luxury, an epitome of idyllic relaxation just 45 minutes from the airport. So, planning a wedding here is half logistics, half magic.

Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain is ideal to host destination weddings



The historic Qal'at al-Bahrain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (above right)

WHERE LUXURY MEETS CULTURE

The interiors of Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain pay homage to the country's local past and traditions with stone carvings, coastal palettes and architectural motifs, all beautifully blending heritage and modern comforts.

Once inside, the 170 well-kitted-out rooms and suites take care of your extended family, friends and add-on guests. Ocean-view deluxe rooms, spacious family suites, and villas ensure every kind of comfort and luxury to make their stay memorable.

A CULINARY CELEBRATION

With a history dating back to the Bronze age, Bahrain's food is an amalgamation of various cuisines, including Arabic, Indian, Persian, and even African touches, besides delicacies ranging from street-style to refined Gulf fare. At Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain, guests can feast on global and local flavours, with every meal designed to offer an immersive touch through varied dining concepts.

Set in the hotel's airy lobby is Majlis Al Fajiri, an all-day lounge serving light bites and refreshing drinks. Another crowd pleaser is Zahrat Al Fayrouz, serving hot and cold mezzes with Mediterranean delights. For Italian cuisine connoisseurs, Due Mari offers fresh salads, creamy risottos, and homemade gelatos. Obab Al Bahar is the multi-cuisine specialty serving Indian, pan-Asian and European fare.

While here, you can't miss the fragrance of freshly brewed Arabic coffee, accompanied by the sweetness of dates all day — it will make you want to lounge around in the lobby.

RESET & REJUVENATE

Beyond the overwhelming get-togethers and celebrations, Talise Spa at Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain invites guests to indulge in rejuvenating therapies like the Moroccan hammam, traditional massages, and detoxifying treatments. For fitness enthusiasts, the property boasts well-equipped gym facilities along with bowls of fresh Bahraini dates as a wholesome post-workout treat — sweet reminders of the charming local heritage. And while you're enjoying the calm, don't miss out on the abra boat ride that meanders through the hotels' peaceful canals.

To revel in the best of the luxury stay, take a dip in the various pools at the property, including their adult-only pool, an infinity pool, as well as a women's-only indoor lap pool. There's also a Sunrise Beach and Kids' Club, where the young ones can stay engaged and entertained with a vibrant activity schedule.

WHEN IN BAHRAIN

No trip to Bahrain is complete without a visit to the historic Qal'at al-Bahrain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Shaped by several civilisations — Dilmun, Islamic, and even Portuguese — this fort is an archaeological gem with a storied past.

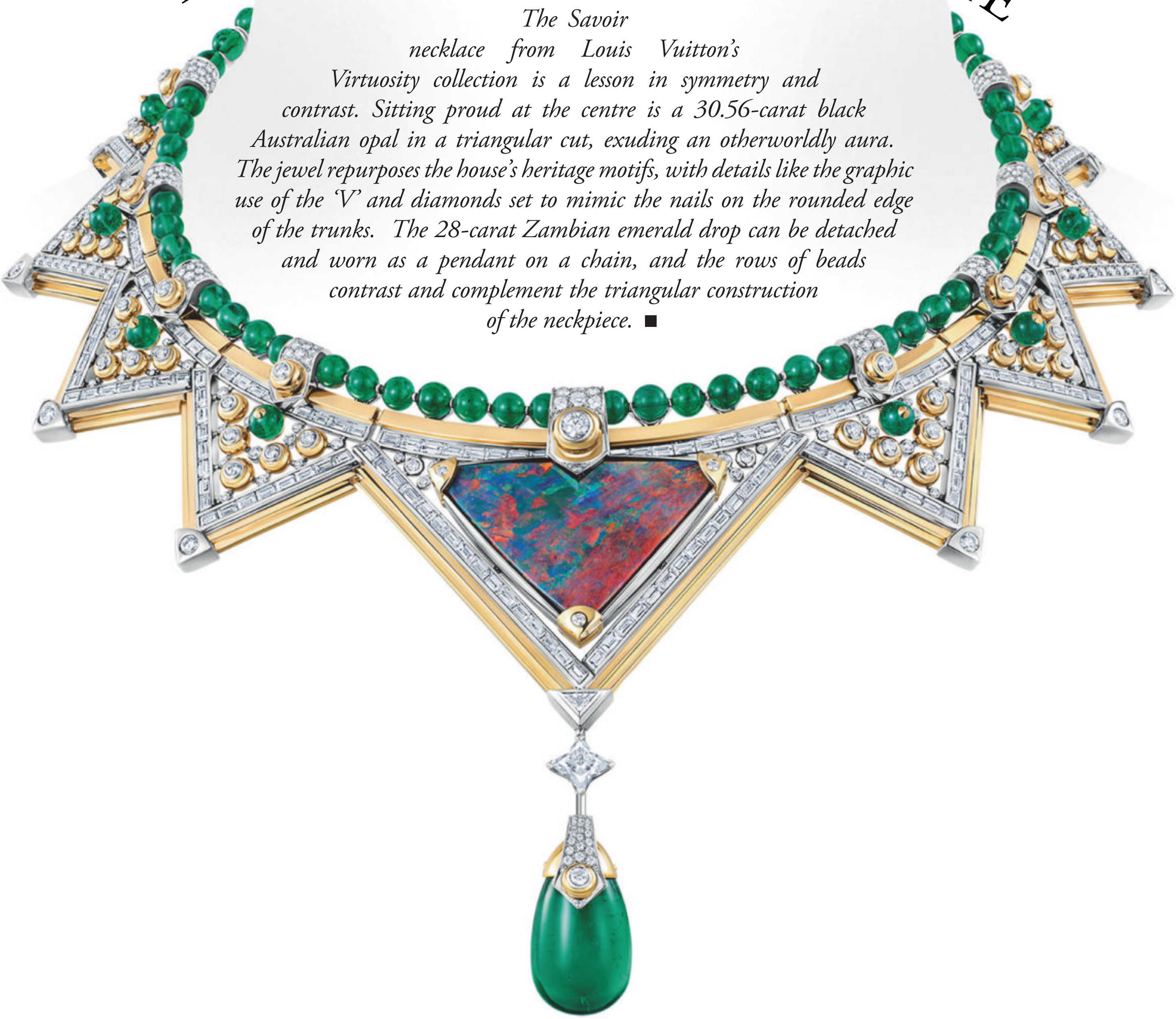
Equally fascinating is the Pearl Trail, where you can explore the island's pearling industry. A 3.5km heritage trail features 17 culturally significant buildings, from traditional homes to a museum dedicated to Bahrain's once-thriving pearl industry. This guided tour will take you through Bahrain's maritime legacy, which now defines its economy and identity. On the way, stop by for a quick bite at Bread and Paper, a quaint bakery, to enjoy a nice savoury snack with ritab or date jam.

And if you're an art lover, don't miss the RAK Art Foundation. Nestled inside the former residence of artist Sheikh Rashid bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the foundation showcases iconic art pieces by renowned artists — including Fernando Botero, Yves Klein, and Frank Stella — in an intimate setting.

All in all, the country, clubbed with a stay at Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain, will carve a place in your heart, with memories and an experience you'll cherish for a lifetime. ■

THE ART OF 'SAVOIR' FAIRE

The Savoir necklace from Louis Vuitton's Virtuosity collection is a lesson in symmetry and contrast. Sitting proud at the centre is a 30.56-carat black Australian opal in a triangular cut, exuding an otherworldly aura. The jewel repurposes the house's heritage motifs, with details like the graphic use of the 'V' and diamonds set to mimic the nails on the rounded edge of the trunks. The 28-carat Zambian emerald drop can be detached and worn as a pendant on a chain, and the rows of beads contrast and complement the triangular construction of the neckpiece. ■



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